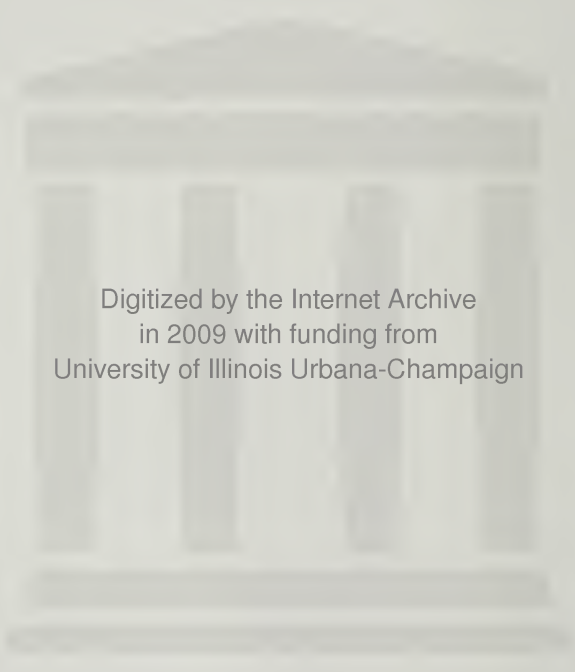


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JULIA.

PHRENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

Good intellectual faculties. Large Benevolence and Veneration. Small acquisitiveness. Considerable Love of approbation, Self-esteem and Wit. Very moderate Firmness and Caution. Destructiveness, Combativeness, the affections and more physical feelings well developed.

THE IMPOSTOR;

OR,

BORN WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE.

ILLUSTRATED.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL II.

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THE IMPOSTOR.

CHAPTER I.

MEDITATION.

IN his elegantly furnished drawing-room, surrounded by works of art and odoriferous flowers, sat the graceful and ambitious impostor whose memoirs we are endeavouring so imperfectly to sketch for the instruction of the human race and the warning of the simple and inexperienced.

A book was in his hand—"The Life of Mahommed, the Prophet-Founder of the creed of Islam"—but his eyes wandered from the storied page, and his thoughts were at that moment rather occupied with the difficulties of the present than the facts of by-gone ages.

"Honesty is the best policy!" Never was a truer or a wiser axiom propagated; for setting aside those uncomfortable sensations, usually termed twinges of conscience, from which Mesmer de Biron was utterly emancipated, and the tortures of constant apprehension and dread of discovery which are, in ordinary cases, inevitable; it is sufficiently plain that, in a shrewd, suspicious, calculating, wide-awake world like that we live in, to be a successful rogue requires no ordinary exertion of address and talent; indeed we are disposed to believe that to be a great rascal, for instance a Julius Cæsar, a Mahommed, a Napoleon, a Cartouche, or last not least, a Count Mesmer de Biron,

it is necessary to be a great hero, and more than that a great and original genius.

But a great conqueror, or even a great pick-pocket may meet with an occasional reverse of fortune, an obstinate fortress or a lost battle, an active policeman, or *gen d'darme*, or a month at the treadmill; and yet be destined to a fresh career of triumphs; but the social impostor, on whose preservation of character, respectability, and outward appearance every thing depends, cannot afford to take a single false step; for him there is no retrograding; a single trick laid bare to public ken, and like a bridge without a keystone, or a train of logical induction upon false premises, the whole edifice, so artfully raised and supported, crumbles to the ground and the abomination of desolation instantly usurps its place.

Mesmer was well aware of this, at the same time he believed that he had founded his structure upon such sure and safely contrived foundation, and inch by inch upraised it with

such consummate art, and surpassing ingenuity, that like the pyramids of Ghiseh, it would stand the test of time, and that nothing short of an earthquake or some gigantic convulsion of nature could tear open its dark and secret recesses.

Exegi monumentum ære perennius
Regalique situ pyramidum altius.

I've raised a monument than brass much stronger,
Bigger than that at Charing Cross, and longer !

He would Horacise with a mixture of pride and facetiousness, as he reviewed the brief, dazzling course by which he had risen from the grade of an obscure and indigent shop-boy, to be "the glass of fashion and the mould of form," the envy of youthful aristocrats and the admiration of the beauties of the occident.

"And have I not a right to this position?" he would exclaim, internally, "I, the son of the greatest poet, perhaps the greatest man that England ever produced ! Is not my blood of noblest Norman race, why should I deem

myself in any way inferior to the mushroom lords I meet with? Who were the great grand-fathers of half of these proud nobles? The student of heraldry and genealogy laughs their would-be ancestral pride to scorn. And how did they obtain their boasted peerages? by deeds of courage, virtue, or patriotism,—or boroughmongering, fawning, threatening, and betraying the rights and interests of the people? Which is the more honourable title, that which is procured or bought by such base, truckling, tradesmanlike means, or that which is boldly arrogated and established, with daring ingenuity and craft, by the sole power of one calm, energetic mind?

Of all consolations, self delusion is at once the most agreeable and the most potent; those manners which, in our hero, were at first mere clever acting, those trains of reasoning which were originally but a sarcastic mockery of argument, became by degrees firmly implanted in his nature; and it is scarcely an exaggeration to

say that, at times, he actually believed himself legally to hold the rank he assumed, and looked upon the story he had invented as an absolute and incontrovertible statement of actual facts.

He, even, in a fit of desperately audacious enthusiasm wrote a letter to the Russian minister in London informing him that his patent of nobility had been, unfortunately, thrown overboard, with other papers, in a storm, during his father's return voyage from Italy, and requested to know how he could obtain an acknowledgment of his title from the Court at St. Petersburg. The minister kindly wrote to one of his friends high in power at the Russian court, and received for answer that an immense number of records and important registers had been burnt about the period at which the Count de Biron's grand-father was supposed to have received his title ; that it was therefore quite impossible to prove the fact after the lapse of nearly a century, but that the Emperor was quite willing to acknowledge the rights

of his friend, providing he (the minister at London) were satisfied of their validity. The Russian minister having taken a great liking to Biron, partly on account of his acquaintance with Russian literature and history, after seeing a few papers and letters of very musty aspect, which Mesmer shewed him, expressed his perfect conviction of their genuine character and accordingly our hero received a formal acknowledgment of his rank from Russia, upon which, as may be imagined, he set no trifling value.

Nevertheless Mesmer's position was becoming exceedingly critical, he had spent all his money and had allowed his passion for Augusta Merlmore so far to overcome his reason that he had determined to sacrifice the chance of bettering his fortunes by a wealthy match, and had even as we have seen consented to the settling of her fortune upon herself. This, however, he could not very well avoid without confes-

sing that his boasted wealth was infinitely less abundant than he had so plentifully hinted, and the world so greedily credited and even exaggerated.

Merlmore might, and probably would require some more substantial proof of his possession of so large a sum of funded property as sixty thousand pounds, and even could that difficulty be got over, the interest of Augusta's fortune was manifestly insufficient to maintain them in the rank and station in society he had assumed. His only available resource was the house he had so recently purchased, but although that might no doubt have been easily mortgaged for much more than he had given for it; the money thus obtained would at the most, even supposing that he ran in debt to the utmost of his power, have enabled him to carry on the war for a few years only when a grand crash would be inevitable; and should nothing turn up to his advantage in the

interim, what was to save him from poverty, insignificance, if not utter ruin, and the discovery of his dearest secrets?

As long as he remained unmarried, none had a right to ask or demand his confidence; to pry into his doings, or question him as to his intentions. "A moment let me pause before I assume the chains which must and will obstruct my energies, and fetter my designs" thought our adventurer, as he leant back in his comfortable *bergere*, and fixed his eyes upon the minute portion of the empyrean visible through the higher panes of the window above the summits of the opposite houses.

A scheme—a brilliant scheme had for some-time past irradiated the mind of the Count, and since the acknowledgment of his title by the Czar of all the Russias, we may call him so with less scruple—but this scheme required time for its execution, time and trouble; in the mean time the marriage must be delayed, and the impatient lover muttered dark and fearful

curses as the necessity of procrastinating the anticipated happiness forced itself upon his conviction.

“I wish that dolt Friskerton would make his appearance !” muttered Biron, “ I hate being kept waiting, and I dare say this dinner at Richmond will be a very slow affair indeed ; if it were not for the sake of meeting this young Duke of Gamblesbury I don’t think I should go at all !”

CHAPTER II.

IN THE KITCHEN.

THE door opened, and a footman in a splendid livery appeared upon the threshold of the apartment.

“There is a young woman, sir, below, wishes to see you!” said the servant.

“A young woman?”

“Yes, she says it is very perticulur, and won’t take no denial anyhow, sir.”

“The devil she will not!” said Biron, turn-

ing pale as a gloomy presentiment of impending evil came over his mind. "What is her name?"

"She won't give no name sir."

"Perhaps she has mistaken the house."

"No sir, she asks for Count de Biron, and says she must see you on affairs of the most witallest himportance."

"Shew her up then," said Biron resolutely.

"Yes sir," said the footman winking his eye as he descended the stairs for his own especial and confidential satisfaction.

"You are to walk hup, mum," said that worthy to the mysterious visiter carelessly preceding her on the stairs.

Biron had recovered his composure; his features were, if anything, calmer and paler than usual; he begged the young woman to be seated, with a tone of easy politeness; and then followed the footman to the door as if he had forgotten something. The attitude of that worthy, as his master unexpectedly opened

the portal, was remarkably suspicious and suggestive of the notion that he had just applied, or been about to apply his ear to the key-hole, at any rate he looked red and confused.

“James,” said Mesmer quietly! “if Lord Friskerton or anybody else calls, show them into the library, and — you need not stay to — you understand.”

“Vell,” muttered the footman, as he descended the stairs, I must say master is a keen one, I don’t like his way of looking at one so cool and devilish-like, it makes one shiver. I’ll tell you what Sago” said he, as he entered the kitchen, to that eminent amongst tigers and valets, “that’s an amazing pretty girl I have just shown up, and if I’m not wastly mistaken she’s a wictim of misplaced affection.”

“Lauk!” exclaimed the housemaid, “do you think master capable of such willany, he looks so gentle and aways speaks so kindly to every one.”

“That’s hall wot the French call turnyer,” said James, hall my hi, and no mistake!”

“An optical delusion utterly devoid of all erroneous ingredient,” quoth Sago, who was a man of education above his rank in life, and who delighted in a pomposity of diction, peculiar to himself. “I flatter myself I understand the governor’s idiosyncrasy.”

“His *what* ;” said the cook in amazement.

“His nature or character,” explained the tiger. “I conceive that I comprehend it more perfectly than most people, than the generality of the human race I mean ; and a mature consideration of circumstances which I have encountered in the course of our brief mutual experience, has led me to the conviction that what in figurative language or metaphorical illustration is commonly termed the *heart* of the aforesaid governor has acquired the adamantine durability of an anciently constructed brick-bat.”

“Good gracious !” cried the housemaid “in spite of all your long sentences I’ll never

believe that such a handsome man could be hard-hearted."

"*Experientia docet*," as the Romans used to say, "you should have seen him drive over the old crossing-sweeper the other day?" "Wor do you drive over me for?" said the man who was only knocked down, and I suppose had no limbs fractured. "What do you get in the way for?" said master, coolly, "if you say another word I will give you in charge of a policeman!"

CHAPTER III.

THE VISITER.

“MAY I inquire?” said Mesmer, with studied politeness, and in tones of more than ordinary suavity, “to what I am indebted for the pleasure of this visit?”

The fair stranger, whose features showed traces of grief and prolonged suffering, did not appear to be above twenty years of age, she fixed her large, blue eyes upon those of Biron, for an instant with an expression of the bitter-

est anguish, and burying her face in her handkerchief burst into a passionate flood of tears.

“My dear Madam, calm this agitation, I implore you, and explain with all convenient speed your motives in calling upon me, as I expect a friend almost directly, and am about to leave town with him.”

“Ask your own conscience ! Alfred !” Sobbed the stranger.

“I should think you were better able to enlighten me” said Mesmer with a sarcastic curl of the lip.

“I am not to be deceived. I know you—it is useless to keep up the farce of denying your own identity ; when some months ago we met in the streets, half delirious as I was with pain and want, I was for a moment deluded by your specious manner, but it needed little reflection to convince me of the falsehood of your assertions.”

“But what is it you desire, my good woman, you really try my patience sadly with your

tirades which are of course too absurd to be worth denying, pray come to the point?"

"I desire wherewith to maintain my child—your child—and myself;" replied the poor girl, with a look of doubt and bewilderment, as if her convictions were, in some measure, shaken by the consummate coolness and effrontery of our hero.

"Indeed?" said Biron, "have you perhaps any other trifling request to make whilst you are about it?"

"Alfred!" exclaimed the unfortunate girl, after a moment of hesitation, suddenly throwing herself upon her knees before her seducer; "once, dearest Alfred! is there no part, no remnant, no minutest vestige of the affection you once professed for me surviving in your heart; can you look without remorse or pity on the wreck you have made; does no feeling of compunction awake in your mind at the sight of one who, for you, lost honour, family, and name; who at your desire sacri-

ficed every hope of future happiness. I do not ask to share your rank, your wealth, your splendor — I am content to serve you in the humblest capacity, so that at times you speak a word of kindness or smile as in the days that are past — but even if all love and kindness for the mother is banished, or their place supplied by hatred and loathing, let me plead for the innocent fruit of our criminal embraces, of the indulgence in delights still sweet to remembrance, for which one at least, of us, has been so bitterly punished; let me entreat you to cherish, to watch over, and educate our child; let him not grow up in ignorance, and poverty, and vice! Surely, Alfred, there are duties which a father is, equally with a mother, bound to perform towards his offspring, whether or not the marriage formula, you were wont to condemn and ridicule, and which in an evil hour you taught me to despise, has preceded its nativity!”

The excitement of the speaker had brought

a bright glow to her pallid cheeks ; her eyes beamed with the lustre of former days, she looked more beautiful in her mournful eloquence than when first her young and innocent heart throbbed to the seductive persuasion of the serpent destroyer of her peace ; and it seemed that even *he* felt the irresistible charm ; for scarcely had she finished speaking when she found herself clasped in the arms of her cruel and faithless lover, and a kiss of affection imprinted on her lips.

“ Dear, dear Clara,” exclaimed he in tremulous tones, “ forgive my neglect, my insane vanity and pride, which prompted me to wish that, on resuming our dormant ancestral name and title, none should recognize in the proud and courted Mesmer Count de Biron, the obscure and lowly Alfred Milford. Yet much as I have wronged you I vow to heaven that I acted as I have done only to prove the truth and disinterestedness of your love. Nobly have you stood the trial, henceforward your happi-

ness shall be my care, and our boy shall receive every advantage that money, care, education, and the fond affection of a father can afford. But remember! let the past be past, a careless word to another may cause me the most painful annoyance, and insure your own destruction. Forget that Alfred Milford ever existed.—I have almost forgotten it myself.”

“My dearest Alfred.”

“Henceforward call me Mesmer: even in private it is not expedient to allude to that which must be buried in eternal oblivion.”

“Then Mesmer—how strange it sounds—what an extraordinary name!”

“It was hereditary in my mother’s family,” said Biron.

“Dearest Mesmer then, I must get accustomed to the word, you may rely upon my secrecy, and discretion, as on my love.”

“Kiss me, Clara, and whatever circumstances may have compelled me to do, doubt not my real, unchangeable devotion. I am obliged

to leave town this afternoon, but to-night I will be with you, and to-morrow you shall be established in suitable apartments where it is to be hoped you will soon learn to forget the privations and sufferings you have endured."

"Dear Alfred—Mesmer I mean—fare you well for the present!"

"*A revoir* dearest—confound the thing!" muttered Biron, "there is Friskerton, I do believe they will meet in the passage, and I shall be bored with his stupid quizzing just when I am least in the humor for it. However I think I have acted for the best in getting the girl into my power again—there is no knowing what she might do—besides she really is devilish pretty, and until I am married—humph! great convenience—and then my son—by Jove! I am a venerable looking specimen of paternity—I will try a new experiment of education on him; he shall turn out a prodigy both moral and physical—Emil, Telemachus, Cyrus, and Co. shall yield to him the palm!

I will buy him an estate, invent him a pedigree and make a *de facto* gentleman of him—for he himself shall never know the truth.—Ah Friskerton old boy! how are you, I suppose we start at once, wait for me, I shall not be five minutes getting ready, it is a splendid day for the Star and Garter.”

CHAPTER IV.

DISINTERESTED FRIENDSHIP.

"You look moody, Biron," said Lord Friskerton, as soon as they were seated in the carriage, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing" replied Mesmer as people generally do to similar accusations.

"Perhaps that pretty blue-eyed girl I met in the hall has something to do with the matter, she looked as if she had been crying, I am afraid you are becoming a very dissipated person?"

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"Perhaps associating with you, has corrupted my morals" said Mesmer, with that peculiar half-jesting, half-sarcastic tone to which we have already alluded.

"You have not lost much at Crocky's lately I hope?"

"Not much! I am a little low spirited! the country air will revive me."

"When does the wedding come off?"

"I don't know—not till the spring I believe—there is no hurry."

"Oh! I should have thought you all fire, and impatience, but I suppose the excitement of the chase is over."

"Who do we dine with, besides the duke of Gamblesbury?" inquired Mesmer abruptly, in order to turn the course of conversation.

"Desmond and Colonel Rossmill I believe, and a Sir John Nokes, a friend of Gamblesbury's."

"Sir John Nokes, I do not remember ever

hearing the name, except in connexion with his friend Mr. Thomas Styles; who is he?"

"A poor devil of a baronet, whose father lost his estate by a law suit, and who lives by writing review articles, and translating and speculating in pictures. He is rather a clever sort of man. The Duke is trying to get him something, but being in the opposition side of the house, has not been successful as yet. I think I shall try and do something for him myself."

"Why, what interest do you take in him?"

"I dislike to see any member of the aristocracy reduced to want or discomfort."

"Well, order-philanthropy, extended down to baronetage, is something new to me, but how do you know that Sir John Nokes suffers either discomfort or want?"

"He is married, titled and fortuneless."

"An evil conjunction in good truth, suppose now I were suddenly reduced to penury,

what would you say, Friskerton, if I proposed to you to give me ten thousand pounds, which after all to *you* would be no very prodigious sacrifice?"

"I should say, by all means, my dear fellow, and thank you for your confidence in my friendship!" replied the generous young peer.

"Well I believe you are in the right, and I respect your noble sentiments," rejoined Mesmer.

"Nonsense, Biron, I am sure you would do the same for me."

"Well to be candid, I think I would, but it is easy to speculate on possibilities; were there any real chance of such a catastrophe occurring, it is difficult to say how we should act."

"I do not doubt *your* friendship Mesmer."

"Nor I yours, my dear Friskerton," said Biron warmly, "it is indeed a consolation amid the heartlessness and selfishness of the world to find one generous spirit on whose aid you

can rely in the most terrible reverses and most dangerous emergencies—and who can foresee the evils of the future.”

“It is indeed !” rejoined the unsuspecting Friskerton.

“Well,” thought our adventurer, “here is at least a resource if my great scheme should fail, and one too in which there is neither risk nor trouble, but to become dependent upon any man is but a *last* resource of Count Mesmer de Biron. No ! I will not despond ; it can, it *must* succeed ! but I will not think of work to day. *Nunc est bibendum !* with to-morrow’s dawn I’ll lay my train, and get my powder ready. And now for pleasure, merriment and wine !”

CHAPTER V.

THE STAR AND GARTER.—EOTHEN.

“ ANCIENT of days ! Illustrious of inns ! Thee, Star and Garter, we revere ! Soft recollections of our schoolboy days steal o’er the recollecting mind, like rosy dreams from distant lands. Yea memory throws a halo round thy dinners, smelt through the vista of past years—when juvenile delight exulting hailed the well-known carriage at the iron portal, the coachman’s longed for livery, the cold stern

father's visits rare and far between, the sympathetic comrade's shout, "Run, run, your governor's there!" the selfish supplement—"ask for a half holiday!"

The butler's calm announcement of the fact at which our young blood boiled, the rapid toilette, the wondering stare to hear that master's praise, fall in the father's credulous ear, from lips which daily had been wont to breathe, anathemizing canes and fierce birch rods, and use them too at times, with daily dirge o'er mangled *Hecuba* and hapless verbs in *m*!

Away! whisked on by the paternal steeds, we reached the bright hotel—a stroll upon the terrace, or in the park, questions, laments, and little marked advice, with messages from home, from fond mammas, and fair and gentle sisters—see, tis time!

The smoking soup, the gurgling wine—how schoolboys eat! how long restrained voracity bursts forth in pruriency! We had not then seen foreign lands, and foreign cooks, and

table d'hotes luxuriously famed, or gone the round of London dinner parties, and clubs and restaurants—and white bait dinners. We had not groaned in woeful biliousness, or wildly raved of indigestion's nightmare, we had not, seized by panic dread of getting stout, condemned ourselves to diet spare and thin, with systematic exercise. Those were the golden days of appetite and health; of court and camp we neither knew nor recked, but to our youthful minds the Star and Garter was a palace grand, its fare, a thing for unsophisticated reverence!

“Oh could those days return, and with them bear the zest and appetite of early years!”

“My dear Desmond,” exclaimed Colonel Rossmill, “for God’s stop, or you will talk me dead with your poetical and culinary remembrances.”

“Indeed Rossmill I do not agree with you” said the young Duke of Gamblesbury. “I like those airy flights of fancy, which bear us

back through the cloudy paths, and over the misty bridges of the past, but I did not know that you were an improvisatore, Desmond?"

"Then in the name of all the muses, and St. Cecilia to boot, do not suspect me of so ominous a talent, simply because standing on Richmond terrace with the keen air of the valley blowing in my teeth, I wished dinner had been ordered half an hour earlier, and involuntarily gave vent to a rhapsody, appropriate to the circumstances!"

"But what objection have you to the character of an impromptu poet?"

"Fifty at the least."

"Give an instance."

"In the first place I should be expected to *tumble* at every *conversazione* or *soirée musicale*, I happened to be invited to."

"I do not see the necessity; you might refuse."

"The invitation?—true, I might imitate the example of two brother *litterati*, the well-known

——s, who when requested to lionize somewhere at very short notice, wrote to express their regret that one was engaged for that particular evening to stand upon his head in Grosvenor Square, and the other to grin through a horse collar in Hyde Park Gardens.”

“No said his grace, I meant that you might refuse to improvise.”

“Impossible without appearing morose or disobliging when gentle words from rosy lips pressed and entertained—no, I feel my yielding nature would give way, and in six weeks I should be victimized to a skeleton.”

“A terrible catastrophe.”

“One I am in no danger of realizing, not possessing the power your grace ascribes to me, but if you wish to hear a real improvisatore—?”

“I should like it above all things!”

“And so should I,” said Colonel Rossmill, in Italy it is true I have heard them; but it is

impossible to appreciate this extraordinary faculty when it is exercised in a language of which we are not perfectly masters."

"Then" said Desmond, "you must hear the Count de Biron."

"Count de Biron!" exclaimed the Duke of Gamblesbury, "why I talked with him the other evening at Rosenberg's for nearly an hour; I thought him one of the most agreeable fellows I ever met; he seemed rather ignorant on the subject of Cambridge life and grouse shooting; but then he was brought up altogether at home, and did not profess to be a sportsman, and was most eager to get information. I took an immense fancy to him, but as for poetry! he appeared to me rather a wit and a man of the world, than a verse-maker!"

"Well, after dinner we may be able to get him to give us a proof of his art," said Rossmill, "by the way there he comes, along with Lord Friskerton---they are quite inseparable."

"I should not fancy there could be much sympathy between them either" said Desmond.

"They both *play* I believe," rejoined the Duke, who had been at the same college at Cambridge, with the author.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Desmond.

"And so am I, exceedingly," said Colonel Rossmill---"Count de Biron is engaged to my niece."

"My dear Colonel," said the Duke, "pray lay no stress upon what I said, I have met them once or twice together at ——'s and hear that they frequent the place, that is all."

"Ah! Colonel, how are you?" said Mesmer, coming up.

"How do you do?"

"Splendid weather!"

"Glorious view!"

"Where's Sir John Nokes?"

"Gone to see if the dinner is not served."

"Delightful escape from London smoke."

"Pleasant drive!"

“ See Windsor ? ”

“ Where ? ”

“ There—but perhaps you are short sighted ? ”

“ I am—very—and I have forgotten my glass.”

“ I shall expect, Friskerton, to see you pass the claret without filling, after that.”

“ Have you seen my niece, lately, Count ? ”

“ Yesterday morning ! ”

“ Quite well ? ”

“ Charming—radiant—divine ! ”

“ Time fixed yet ? ”

“ No ! most likely next spring.”

“ Why the delay ? what is in Merlmore’s head now ? ”

“ Oh ! I am to buy an estate, and make to myself cares and troubles before my time.”

“ Not a bad plan, it gives a man more position in the country.”

“ There’s the waiter ! ”

“ Dinner is on the table gentlemen.”

“ *Allons !* ”

“I say Biron, Desmond tells me you are an improvisatore?”

“Then he is a Dutchman!”

The dinner was good, so were the wines, the guests were hungry, the champagne was iced to a nicety, all were in excellent spirits, and *repartees* flew about on all sides like sparks from a burning house. The dessert was on the table, filberts were cracking.

“I say, Sir John,” exclaimed Friskerton “what was the name of the fellow who discovered the circulation of the blood?”

“Harvey,” said the baronet, “but what is ——”

“Harvey, eh? same man that invented the fish sauce?”

“No, that is I believe a more recent, though not less important invention.”

“Well,” said Friskerton, it was a fine idea, but the circulation of the bottle was a better, so pass the Rudesheimer.”

“Have you seen the new book on the East, Biron?” said the Duke of Gamblesbury.

“What Eōthen, or Prince Puckler, or the Crescent and the Cross?”

“I suppose,” threw in Friskerton, “that Mr. Warburton rode half way round, and then cut across the desert on his dromedary to judge of his book by the title. I got no further.”

“Eōthen of course,” replied the Duke without without heeding the young peer’s attempt at facetiousness.

“I have read it twice over” replied Mesmer.

“And your opinion?”

“I am in ecstasies with its freshness, its originality, its piquancy.”

“Yes,” rejoined the Duke, “it is a delightful book, so superbly divested of all pedantry, and boring descriptions of localities and correctness of former travellers, and, still more tedious, antiquarian conjectures.”

“Is that Eōthen, you are alluding to,” enquired Colonel Rossmill.

“The same !”

“Then permit me to say that I never read a book, through which there ran so exquisite a vein of humour, and facetious irony.”

“I agree with you,” said Desmond, “one is actually puzzled to know when the author is in jest or in earnest, his horror of ‘utter respectability,’ is *zum sterben* !”

“They say,” said Sir John Nokes, “that K—— had it by him nine years before he published it—*nonum prematur in annum* !”

“A rare instance of Horace’s advice being followed in these times said Biron.”

“Do you know K——?” said the Duke.

“Slightly replied Desmond !”

“What sort of looking man is he?”

“Quiet, pale, brilliant eyes when he looks up, observant; in society the expression of his countenance is peculiar, we used to call him ‘Devil K——,’ at Cambridge.”

“Ha, ha ! an excellent *sobriquet*; by the way, that reminds me of his bargain with the

magician at Cairo, to raise the devil, for two pounds ten shillings in the great pyramid—it was a pity the wizard died of the plague before the time appointed.”

“Had he known of the nickname to which Desmond just now alluded, a mirror would have saved him an incantation,” said Mesmer.

“I suppose,” said Friskerton, “that had the experiment been really tried, some poor devil of an Arab dressed up for the occasion would have undertaken the *role*, for that night only.”

“*For that night only*—K——— would have sent a bullet through his carcass if he had, I am persuaded,” rejoined Biron.

“Perhaps the whole was but a plan to rob and plunder him.”

“How excellent is the description of his interview with the pasha,” said Mesmer, “on first crossing the frontier with his faithful portmanteaus and patient and long suffering carpet bags?”

“The interpreter’s calling the would-be magistrate, a—possible policeman of Bedfordshire!” said Rossmill.

“I think I shall go to the East,” said the Duke of Gamblesbury, “will you go with me, Biron?”

“You forget that——”

“Ah true—well you, Desmond, and Friskerton? what say you?”

“*Volontiers*,” said Desmond, “give me a fortnight to correct the last proofs of my novel, and I am ready to travel to Kamschatka if you please, variety is my vital principle; I have neither wife nor children, thanked be heaven! and never mean to have any, if I can help it—except those in three volumes, which, instead of requiring attention, are so dutiful as to do something towards assisting their father and his, unfortunately, rather scanty rental.”

“No going to the East for me,” said Lord Friskerton, “it is so infernally cockneyfied!——”

“An excellent objection truly,” said Mesmer, but you have not read *Eöthen*—Oh! how in my early youth I used to revel in the dreams of the orient! how I used to long for the lance and rapid steed of a Bedoween chief! how my soul used to dwell in tents, amid lofty palm-trees and the winds of the plain! how my heart used to throb at the idea of plundering a caravan, of cutting off the heads of fat merchants of Damascus, and scouring the desert like the breath of an exasperated whirlwind! All these thoughts of bygone days are resuscitated in my imagination by the perusal of this extraordinary volume!”

“And do you still feel any of these wild and romantic inclinations?” inquired the Colonel.

“Not exactly, if I went to the East *now*—it would be to establish a dynasty.”

“Biron, my dear fellow,” said the Duke, “will you favor us with a specimen of your

extraordinary talent in improvising—it is no use denying the fact, we shall be infinitely your debtors?”

“Well,” replied Biron, “this wine is inspiring, choose a subject, and stop me when you are tired.”

“There is no fear of that,” said the Duke---
“but we will leave the subject to your imagination.”

Then we are off on the railroad of rhyme!” said our hero, tossing down a bumper.

“Readers! if verse excites your aversion, skip the next chapter, and go on with the story.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

‘THE LOST CHESTERFIELD’—AN AFTER DINNER
IMPROVISATION, A I.A. INGOLDSBY.

“ I WILL tell you a story, then,” said Mesmer, “since you have left the choice of a subject to my vagrant fancy ; a story of a droll adventure, which happened neither in the course of my own nor anybody else’s experience, the *facts* whereof are utterly beyond the pale of possibility, the characters wherein are drawn from death, without the slightest regard to nature,

and the moral of which nobody will ever pay any attention to.

“ In these respects it will be as it were the antipodes of our modern novels, so called (*lucus a non lucendo*) from the scrupulous avoidance of all novelty in their pages.

“ I make these prefatory remarks in order to gain time to collect my ideas—but to my tale :—

I.

The way was long the wind was cold—
(See the lay of the ultimate minstrel, by Scott,
From which the first line I have ventured to quote,)
As about me a waterproof Chesterfield rolled,
 I beat
 A retreat,
Down Fuzzleton-street,
(A name in the blue book perhaps you'll not meet,)
 { Anxiously striving to keep on my feet,
 { Which was, owing no doubt to the fast falling sleet,
By no means so easy a task as it seemed,
Whilst with thoughts most confusing my fantasy
 teemed,
Indeed most people think all that follows I dreamed.

II.

However to place
The true state of the case,
More clearly before the intelligent gaze
Of my Lord, and the Colonel, Sir John, and your
Grace,
And last, not least, Desmond, I here should avow,
That I came from the house of my friend Harry
Bowe,
Where some friends had been kicking up rather a
row,
On the strength of his wine,
Which was varied and fine,
(His chateau Lafitte,
Like Sib's wit,
Is divine !)
To be brief, he had asked half a dozen to dine,
Each his intimate friend,
And the evening to spend,
In a way the society called the tea-total,
Might perhaps not approve of—viz., over the bottle.

III.

The clock struk two !
I scarcely knew,
Where I was, nor appeared there a cab to my view,
Colder and colder the night wind blew,

Tighter my Chesterfield round me I drew,
 My fingers were freezing,
 My nose took to sneezing,
 Each moment less pleasing,
 Became my condition,
 And I longed for a policeman of—any division,
 The way to inquire,
 A fruitless desire,
 When I suddenly tripped, and fell flat in the mire !

IV.

(Incoherently.)

*	*	*	visions !
	*	*	divisions—

Mud—cab—soda-water—wine—girls—politicians !

V.

I got up—rubbed my eyes,
 With joy and surprise—
 “ Ha ! what visions inspiring bright hopes now
 arise !”
 Wild howled the blast,
 As there glided past,
 An omnibus vast,
 Of unusual size,
 In letters of fire, the inscription I read,
 And thus, if I rightly remember, it ran—

*“ Grand junction imperial Stygian van,
Unlimited license to carry the dead.”*

VI.

The Cad's complexion was deadly pale,
His shadowy form like a black crape veil,
In the looks of the horses one plainly could see,
“ For kittens and puppies no dinner are *we* !”
In his phantom hat,
The driver sat,
A phantom himself, in a phantom great coat,
And silently puffed at a phantom cheroot.

VII.

The outsides mostly,
Looked spectral and ghostly,
Unearthly forms to behold were they,
Skeleton crowds,
Were hanging in shrouds,
From the roof and the wheels thick as blossoms in
May !

VIII.

“ Quick, quick, get in”—
“ Belgrave Square ?”—“ Yes—*grave*
Time and trouble by going with us you will save,

With a ghastly grin,
And ironical mien,
Cried the shady conductor—he spoke, in I sprang,
And the door—'twas a coffin lid—shut with a bang,
While a choir of professionals, lately deceased,
In dismal tones,
Half shrieks, half groans,
“*King Death is a rare old fellow*,” sang.
When they stopped, I “applauded what they had
done,”
Said, the ghost of a concert was capital fun,
And as present affairs stood, secure of a *run*,
In fine, I expressed myself very much pleased,
But could not help saying with critical air,
“No doubt but the fellow is *old* enough,
But as for *rare*—ye sextons !—*rare* !
(When we know that the churchyards in London
can spare,
Such very short leases to those who go there)
I must roundly declare—
It's all stuff !”

IX.

But perchance you may think that according to
rule, I
Ought to have quivered,
And shaken and shivered,

All my blood in a trice
Have been turned into ice,
Each particular hair
To have stood bolt upright,
Stiff as that of a bear,
In a cage at a fair,
Stirred up with the long-pole for children's delight ;
Instead of regarding the matter so coolly,
Nor doth it appear,
To myself very clear,
Whence came the *sang froid* I, upon this occasion,
So amply displayed—perhaps 'twas the wine,
Which, as I observed, was remarkably fine
But *facts* after all don't require explanation.

X.

Still onward, still onward, still onward we flew,
In the ' Junction, imperial, Stygian van ;'
With a hurricane
A race we ran,
And beat it too,
In the turn of a screw,
Almost before the race began !

XI.

We had left the earth far, far behind,
We had passed Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars,

And even to 'Herschel' the go by had given
On our road to the—Archangel's, kicked out of
 heaven,
By gravity's law being no-way confined,
We soon distanced even the comets and stars,
Still onward, still onward, still onward we flew,
When the phantom cad a shrill horn blew,
 Our course was done,
 The goal was won,
"Ladies and gentlemen—Charon's pier!"
Said the shady conductor, "ve gets out 'ere."

XII.

Out they tumbled, that spectral crew,
Figures unearthly and strange to view,
In garments, to judge by appearances, new
When the earth, in the days of old Noah, was
 flooded,
And they trod, with their skeleton feet, on the toes
Of the grim looking cad, and although he alluded
 To 'paying the fare,'
 I judged from his air,
That the same in the passage across was included,
Indeed when he found we would not be imposed on,
He pressed an appeal for a 'tip' ev'ry ghost on.

XIII.

Ding dong ! ding dong !
An infernal gong,
Announced that the *steamer* was ready for starting,
For Charon his wherry,
Has long ceased to ferry,
His business increasing to such an extent,
He at last his friend Mercury begged to invent,
Some more efficacious machine for transporting
His numerous clients—Merc. ran to consult
With the cyclops—a steamer was soon the result

XIV.

We know the infernals invented artillery,
Unless all the world has been humbugged by Milton,
I know the same gentleman patronized Sillery,
(My authority *de rebus his* may be built on)
Long ere it on earth wore a hat of tin foil,
And we see they first tried the effects of a boil,
—But a truce to these lengthy digressions, for,
hark !
The bell tolls again, it is time to embark.

V.

What crowding, what rushing !
What scrambling and pushing !

What elbowing, muttering, squeezing, and crushing,
What a state some are in,
Who find out they've no 'tin,'
Not the ghost of a check upon Coutts or on Glynn,
One gentleman ghost—quite a spectre of fashion—
To 'work his way over' the stream, volunteers,
But Charon declines it, expressing some fears
Concerning his knowledge of steam navigation,
When the ghost consigns Charon to (shocking !)
damnation,
And walks off in the ghost of a furious passion !

XVI.

The passengers' faces
Wore rueful grimaces,
No wonder—considering where they were going—
Till Mercury brought up a couple of cases
Of brimstone cigars, which he called *Acherontic*,
And sold them without hesitation upon tick,
(To Hermes the money no doubt is still owing)
These were flavoured with some antimonial physic,
And made all the ghost-smokers morally seasick !

XVII.

At length we landed,
On shore I handed,

The shade of a fair *ci devant Figurante*,
In the shade of a petticoat modishly scanty,
When two porters Infernal, determined to carry,
My luggage, before their attempts I could parry,
Laid violent hands on my waterproof coat,
In my haste I advised them to go to old Harry,
Forgetting that there he was quite *comme il faut* (!)
(As we read in the newspaper trade *advertisements*,
When tailors add rhymes to their other enticements,)
And away they both ran to his palace's portal,
Laughing loud at my words, when I said I was
mortal.

XVIII.

Not feeling the heart,
With my wrapper to part,
I set off in their wake like an Ioway dart,
Or an I O U friend,
Whom you happened to lend,
Lord knows how long ago ready money to spend,
In vain I beseeched,
'They ran off like bewitched,
The portal I reached,
And perused the inscription,
Which told me to 'leave hope behind' in Egyptian,
The porters were vanished—'twas suddenly dark—
Then horror of horrors ! a furious bark !

Another—another !—and then *unisono* ! !

They howled, my position by no means was *buono*.
 'Twas Cerberus—murder !—I felt a fierce bite,
 Shouted with might,
 Awoke in a fright,
 And — found myself stretched to my boundless
 delight,
 On the steps of the door of the Chancellor's court,
 Instead of Prince Lucifer's dread sally port,
 By the cold, greyish light of a still colder morn,
 Was't a dream ?—*no, the Chesterfield really was*
 gone !

MORAL.

Never take too much wine—but if once you're
 excited,
 Send out for a cab, if you've none of your own,
 Or there's no little prospect of getting benighted ;
 And when slippery, carry a stick, if alone.

Next, don't get into any conveyance not knowing,
 Distinctly before you do, *where* it is going.

Above all, avoid Chancery's bottomless sack,
 Or don't dream of escape *with a coat on your*
 back !"

" Bravo Biron," cried the Duke of Gambles-
 bury.

“ I have never heard anything like it since poor Theodore,” said Desmond.

“ I do not believe Hook himself could have done it,” said Friskerton.

“ Your friendship blinds you, Friskerton,” said Biron *modestly* ; “ but of course it is impossible, on the spur of the moment, to avoid errors in versification and even in grammar.”

“ Well, really,” said Sir John Nokes, “ I have taken it down in shorthand, and I think even as a matured *jeu d’esprit*, you have no cause to be ashamed of it.”

“ It is most extraordinary,” said Rossmill, “ you ought to have it published.”

“ I will get it into the —— magazine, if you like,” said Sir John.

“ As you please,” said Mesmer laughing. “ I make you a present of the valuable copyright, the more especially as had you not condescended to take it down, it would have been lost to the world for ever.”

“ Do you mean to say that you could not repeat it if necessary ?”

“Certainly not—not a dozen lines.”

“Wonderful !”

“Yes,” thought Mesmer, “it *would*, perhaps, be rather wonderful if I had not had it all written down at home on superfine foolscap !”

CHAPTER VII.

BLACKHEATHIANA.

Mr. Adolphus Cashall inhabited a small but comfortable house at Blackheath. It was a species of detached villa, with iron railings in front of a garden, limited in extent to the size of an ordinary dining-room, which said railings were rendered uncomfortable to be climbed over, by the spiky nature of their summits. Moreover, there were venetian blinds to the windows, and two cast-iron scrapers at

the door of curious and antique manufacture.

On his way to this Blackheathian abode, was journeying the illustrious Mesmer, Count de Biron, with objects in view hereafter to be developed. But before we introduce either him or the reader to the interior of Mr. Cas-hall's villa, we shall take the liberty of filling a page or two with digressive observations in a manner at once, instructive, discursive, and interesting.

Like many other sage young gentlemen of the present age, it has been our fate to see a great deal more of exotic climes than of our own. With every disinclination to acquire that geographical information, which, to our mind, has a vile tendency to destroy the poetry of travel, by setting bounds and limits to the roving flights of an exuberant imagination, we have been as it were *nolens volens* compelled to imbibe from the dull pages of John Murray's everlastingly recurring hand-

books, which glare redly upon the wanderer's dusty eyes in every corner of the accessible globe, certain general topographical ideas relative to certain countries and cities we have travelled through or visited, whilst with regard to our own dear native land we still remain in happy ignorance upon the subject.

Since we abjured jackets and lay down collars, our experience of Great Britain and Ireland, with their divers and various insular satellites, has been confined chiefly to a few country seats, houses, and cottages of our acquaintance; two or three watering places of popular repute, and certain streets and squares of the metropolis, including those oases in the sirocco blowing desert of civilization, the parks of Hyde and Regent; but of *Blackheath* we do happen to know something—we spend a day there occasionally with a most excellent friend, whose mind comprehends breakfasts, and who indulgeth in a taste for poetry and cricket—presuming,

therefore, O reader, that your ignorance is equal to our own (the march of intellect makes knowledge daily more vulgar) we shall presently proceed to impart to you some of the facts we have collected as to this interesting region.

Meanwhile, excuse a burst of poetry, enthusiasm, or something of the kind-- we really cannot resist the temptation !

Mile stones accursed ! what horror your pale faces rouse within us ! ye stern uncompromising sentinels, divesting life's short journey of its soft delusions, how we abhor your dusky Roman numerals !

Orbis veteribus notus !—world of Herodotus and Socrates, (thrice blessed ancient Greeks !) would that some spell could conjure back again the days, whilst yet the earth was *flat*, whilst yet no damning mathematic limits bounded the tourist's curiosity, whilst yet a vast eternity of space lured in the daring wanderer---but *now*, the earth reduced to base

rotundity, the zest of travel is gone and chained like monkeys to a post, we must content ourselves with threading in imagination the starry labyrinths of heaven's expanse, and lament with Archytas,—

Nec quidquam tibi quod est,
Ærias tentasse domos animoque rotundum
Percurrisse polum—morituro.

Morituro!—to die! Will death release us from this thralldom? We will not say '*lasciate ogni speranza*,' nor will we quote a passage from Goethe which just occurs to us as opposite, nor a line of Euripides, nor extracts from half a-dozen authors in as many languages all admirably applicable, but leaving the reader to give us credit for their reminiscence or not, as he pleases, proceed at once to our brief remarks upon Blackheath, after which, placing our trust in Providence, we hope to get advanced the main subject of this our veracious

and eventful history at a much more rapid pace than we have hitherto exerted.

How far Blackheath is from town we do not know. The way to get there, if you do not use a vehicle of your own, is either by steam-boat or railway, the fare is inconsiderable. You are landed at Greenwich, a place chiefly remarkable for a hospital and inns, at which small sprats and brown bread and butter, yclept white bait, are served up at dinner. People go there to eat them and look at the dirty water. There is twice every year a fair held at this town, at which we understand there are very black goings on. We once knew a man who went there to see life—that is, low life in high perfection—he lost his hat and nearly had his eyes scratched out by an amiable virago, whom he declined waltzing with in a booth.

We believe Greenwich is regarded as ‘in the country’ by the youthful and Sunday excursioning snobocracy. The way from

Greenwich to the heath is through a park, in which there is a hill, down which it is customary to run, or, according to local tradition, to roll. We ran down it ourselves with great glee, to the infinite annoyance of a friend who was with us, who not having studied true philosophy, was, and I fear still is, subject to sundry small and popularly prevailing weaknesses of pride and conventional prejudices. From the park the traveller emerges upon the heath, where camels and Arabs, pooh! (how this Eōthen runs in my brain) donkeys and donkey boys, I mean, may be had for the further prosecution of the journey. The situation is healthy, the inhabitants, taken *en masse*, utterly respectable, and the houses chiefly stuccoed or compoed over, which ever may be the correcter term. In the neighbourhood is Shooter's hill, the name whereof requires no derivation; our friend Byron the poet's child (by adoption) Don Juan, was nearly murdered there, and we ourselves were

once buried near that fated spot—on paper—
by a d—d good natured friend, and created,
not a little astonishment by our resuscitation.*

His throat was cut from ear to ear,
His skull was beaten in,
His pockets inside out were turned,
And destitute of 'tin.'

A coroner's inquest is held upon the body --

Then Wakely says we will proceed
To inquest on the next one,
Whilst in a coffin ——— was nailed,
And sent to Snooks the Sexton.

They 'resurrectioned' him that night,
Defying ghost and spectre,
And sold him for a song—like this—
To Sawbones the dissector, &c.

So much for Blackheath, its history, peculiarities, literature, and antiquities, with the road leading thereto. Childe Harold is the only guide-

*In justice to my friend C——, his hospitality, and his muse, I will venture to quote a couple of verses from this MS. effusion, describing a supposed murder on Shooter's hill.—

book to Europe, a man of sentiment ought to carry in his pocket. Let what we have written suffice for Blackheath.

By the way, Mesmer drove down in his cabriolet by quite a different route, or we might have alluded to him in our narrative.

His zealous tiger, Sago, gave the door-bell of Mr. Adolphus Cashall's house a tug, which brought forth a peal that frightened the whole neighbourhood, from their propriety, so much so indeed, that some of them never got back to it again, and two elopements and a seduction took place in the course of the next fortnight.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CATASTROPHE.

THE door was opened by one of those universal geniuses so abundant in the metropolitan environs in whom the offices of groom, footman, gardener, and coachman are laboriously focused, and of whose duties 'the whole duty of man' is but a minute decimal fraction.

His face was red with exertion, and his arms were but half inserted into the sleeves of a

dirty jacket of striped calico, chintz, or gingham ; if we are wrong in the stuff, excuse our ignorance, domestic people will know what we mean ; the bow of his neckcloth was ingeniously tied, inclining obliquely at an angle of forty-five degrees, so that one end playfully tickled the left ear of the wearer, whilst the other was constantly endeavouring to gratify a laudable curiosity by poking its extreme point into his right waistcoat pocket.

“ Is Mister Cashall at home—does your lord worship his Penates to-day ?” inquired Sago the tiger.

“ He’s in,” replied the suburban everything-arian with a stare of unmitigated astonishment.

“ Make known to him, then, that the Count de Biron wishes to see him.”

Mesmer descended from the cab and was shewn into a drawing-room of brown holland covered aspect, where, for some minutes, he amused himself with the contemplation of a

pair of gold fish in a glass bowl, the *waggery* of whose *tails*, if not so sublime as that of the instructive tale before us, was at any rate sufficiently entertaining for the mind of a man whose thoughts were as far from the fish, as they from Helicon.

In a few minutes Mr. Cashall entered the room ; he looked at once nervous, fidgetty, and overawed by the rank of his unexpected visitor.

For reasons of his own the astute attorney Monville, had not deemed it necessary or expedient to tell his good friend and partner in iniquity, Adolphus Cashall, the mode of our hero's interference concerning the Colonel's house ; perhaps because he feared to lower his own importance and character for courage and ingenuity, by letting his comrade know how he had been bullied and outwitted by a young gentleman who was neither a lawyer nor a Mosaic Arab.

“ I wish to speak to you on business, Mr.

Cashall," began the Count in measured terms, "regarding Mr. Guy Merlmore."

"Merlmore!" exclaimed Cashall in a husky voice, starting and turning pale, and glancing rapidly at the countenance of his visitor.

"Mr. Guy Merlmore," replied Biron calmly. A serene immobility overspread his features, and his eyes rested with a cold, pitiless expression upon the ex-merchant, an expression of conscious power, unchangeable resolve, and scornful superiority.

Cashall could not support the penetrating gaze of the impostor; with a chill sensation of apprehension he begged the Count to be seated, and his eyes sought the seals of his watchchain.

"I think we had better not be disturbed," said Mesmer, with the usual soft and melodious articulation, wherewith he was wont to cloak the natural fierceness of his nature, "my business is rather important."

"Oh! very well, I will—" the ex-merchant rose and rang the bell.

The nondescript man servant replied to the summons.

“ Say I am not at home, whoever calls,” said his master, “ and let nobody disturb us until I ring again.”

“ Very well, sir.”

“ And tell my man to put up the horse at the nearest public-house ; I will send for him when I want him.”

“ Very well sir,” and the nondescript made his exit from the apartment.

“ Now sir,” said Mr. Cashall, striving in vain to imitate the calm self-possession of his visiter, “ what have you to say to me ?”

“ Do not be nervous my dear sir ; I have called to make a communication to you that will, if I mistake not, be much to your advantage.”

“ Nervous— ha ! ha !—the weather, certainly, has been rather oppressive lately, and I have been troubled with head-ache ; but pray proceed.”

“ You knew Mr. Guy Merlmore ?”

“ I know him sir, but the poor man is now, I understand, completely out of his senses—quite insane—in fact, altogether *non compos mentis*, as the lawyers call it.”

“ Hem !” said Biron, “ you were a bankrupt some time since I believe ?”

“ Sir,” said Cashall reddening, “ I do not know what right you have to insult my misfortunes.”

“ I am sorry to hurt your feelings,” rejoined Mesmer quietly, “ but in matters of business one often has no other alternative.”

“ Well, sir, I *was* a bankrupt, but I would have you know, sir, that I paid twenty shillings in the pound, and—”

“ Very true ; I am perfectly aware of *every* fact relating to that business.”

“ Well, sir, then you must be also perfectly aware that I left the court without a stain upon my integrity and honor ?”

“ Mr. Cashall, this excitement is totally

unnecessary ; I have come here upon a pure affair of business, and excuse my saying so — do not care a straw about the propriety or impropriety of your conduct, past, present, or future. I have merely a few facts to communicate to you, which are, I imagine, worth your trouble to listen to.”

“ I am all attention sir.”

“ Mr. Guy Merlmore, in whom the hereditary taint of insanity had already, as you were aware, slightly exhibited itself, lent to you, at the recommendation of his solicitor, Mr. Monville, on mortgage—”

“ Sir !” exclaimed Cashall, his countenance becoming livid, and cold drops of sweat bursting from the pores of his forehead.

At this crisis, a piercing shriek of agony and fear resounded through the apartment, the shadow of some falling object for a moment intercepted the light of the window, and a beautiful child, of about two years old, lay dead upon the gravel walk, in front of the

house, covered with blood and dust, and apparently fearfully mutilated.

“ Good God ! my child ! ” exclaimed the wretched Cashall, and rushing into the garden—the windows opened to the ground—he raised the lifeless body in his arms, and bore it through another door into the house.

The proverb says, and experience confirms its truth, that misfortunes rarely come alone.

Zoologically speaking, misfortunes may, therefore, be classed amongst the gregarious animals.

CHAPTER IX.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

FOR more than two hours Mesmer de Biron sat alone and unheeded in Mr. Cashall's drawing-room. He heard however the moving of feet, the murmur of voices, the slam of the street door as the servant ran for the doctor, the ring of the doctor on his arrival, the distant sound of Mrs. and Miss Cashall's hysterics—then all was still.

“Most provoking accident!” thought the

man without a conscience, "why could not the child fall out of the window and break its nasty little neck yesterday, or the day before, or tomorrow, or the day after?—But no, it must happen precisely on the day I choose to come down, and at the very moment when I was getting to the marrow of my story and most of all wished to avoid interruption. However it cannot be helped, I will not leave this if I can possibly avoid it, without getting my business settled. After all, a thousand pounds is not to be earned without trouble!"

At length Mr. Cashall re-entered the apartment. The deadly pallor of his countenance was the more striking from the coal black hue of his hair and whiskers. His clothes were spotted with blood, and his eyes rolled feverishly in their sockets.

"I trust," said Biron "that the child still lives?"

"No sir, he is gone; his death must have been instantaneous."

"There is consolation to a good Christian," said Mesmer, "in the reflection that he is now an angel in heaven."

"Yes, yes," replied Cashall, hurriedly, "there was something in the manner of his visiter that he did not exactly like; but, sir, if you were a father ——"

"Perhaps I am," said Biron, "but that is, here, of little consequence, it is useless to give way to regret, and vain repinings for that which is past and irrevocable. Pious resignation and the perusal of the holy scriptures will ——"

"An excellent theory sir—but do not let this—this accident prevent you from concluding the communication you were about making."

"Indeed," said Biron, "I deeply sympathise with your misfortune, and were my business less pressing would propose to adjourn its discussion to some future day, but it admits of no delay."

"Pray proceed."

"Will you sir, have the kindness to hear

me out without interruption, it will save useless discussion."

"I will do so. Afterwards I can reply."

"Of course—well then, I was observing that you borrowed five thousand pounds of Mr. Guy Merlmore upon mortgage of certain houses."

"It is a d—d lie, an infernal, slanderous, and malicious aspersion!" thundered Cashall.

Biron twirled his moustache, and replied calmly, "you had better command your temper, hear me out, and then reply."

"Sir!" said the *cidevant* bankrupt, "is this a fitting time to choose to attack the honor of a ——?"

"Mr. Cashall, there is nothing dishonorable in anything I have as yet mentioned I have accused you of no crime; supposing I were about to do so, and you are conscious of being innocent, surely this agitation is perfectly unnecessary."

“Go on sir—go on.”

“Mr. Guy Merlmore was about to leave England; it was contrived by Monville and yourself that instead of signing a deed of mortgage he should sign a deed of partnership.”

“Sir! do you mean ——”

“Listen to the end,” said Mesmer sternly. One deed was read to him, he signed another; you were accessory to the fact; he was going abroad, his health was bad—his subsequent insanity favoured your ingenious scheme, he was ruined. His previous eccentricity accounted for his not having mentioned his speculation, or consulted his friends. You were a bankrupt, paid twenty shillings in the pound, robbed Guy Merlmore of his all, and secured the respect, pity, and generous assistance of your creditors!”

“Such accusations must be *proved* sir,” said Cashall in a suffocating voice.”

“Yes,” said Biron coolly, “and I have the

means of proving them, I have witnesses at my beck.

“It is known than to others?” inquired the ex-merchant eagerly.

“No Mr. Cashall, it is known to none but to me, and Mr. Guy Merlmore himself, who under my care and skillful psychological treatment is rapidly recovering.”

“Ah!” said the bankrupt, “but you said you had evidence—witnesses of this—slandrous accusation.”

“Waive ceremony! you are already compromised—have already acknowledged the fact—not that your confession matters a whit; I have witnesses as I told you just now, to prove all, and much more than I have stated; and mark me, they are in possession of, and can be called to attest, at a moment’s notice, facts which would suffice to condemn both Monville and yourself, without the shadow of a prospect of escape, but they are, and but for me, will

even remain in ignorance of the tendency of those facts, or the results their being exposed and sifted, would inevitably lead to ——”

“ And pray sir who are those witnesses ?” demanded Cashall, assuming a brazen look, and no longer attempting to play the part of indignant innocence, who are they ?”

“ Nonsense,” said Biron, “ you would not ask me such a question, if you knew me even so well as your friend Monville, to whose fears or prudence I was indebted for the purchase of the house I inhabit, at little more than half its value. In which by the way you contemplated if I remember rightly, a certain evening dialogue in the Haymarket, to invest a portion of your honest sayings.

“ Devil !” exclaimed Cashall — and the witnesses ?”

“ Are at my beck—not bribed, they are honest men—but I know them ; the madman too is on the verge of restoration to reason.’

“ And pray what has the Count de Biron to do with all this ?” enquired the ex-merchant bitterly.

“ That is what I am coming to ; you perceive it is in my power to bring the whole affair to light ; and you may imagine the consequences to Mr. Monville and yourself—you wish to know how they may be averted ?”

“ Yea,” replied Cashall, bitterly, as a dark thought flashed across his confused and excited brain.

“ Well then, I am in want of money of which you have plenty.”

“ Me ! a bankrupt—dependent on the charity of relations.”

“ Pshaw ! Of course you made a purse, as the city phrase goes, if I remember—Of course you secreted a fund somewhere, before you bedeviled your books.”

“ Take care—sir—what you.”

“ Pshaw again !” said Biron, be a consistent

rogue, and transact business without getting into a passion."

The features of Cashall worked convulsively, and his hands were clasped like an iron vice, his eyes were fixed upon the ground, he did not venture to regard the impassive countenance of his tormentor, whose gleaming eyes alone bespoke the internal fire of his spirit.

"To resume," said Biron, slowly, "I want two thousand pounds."

"Two thousand? impossible!"

"Let me have a cheque for that amount—engage to meet it within three days, and the witnesses remain in eternal ignorance of the value of their evidence. Guy Merlmore becomes a raving maniac for life, and is consigned to the tender cares of a private asylum, in a remote county, where even the sane are soon goaded to incurable madness, whilst from my memory the secrets, the knowledge I have obtained, vanish for ever"

“And what guarantee have I that you will keep your word.”

“Honour amongst thieves!” said Mesmer carelessly.

“Enough—I *agree*,” said Cashall with a malignant smile.

“Let the cheque be made out in the name of Richard Johnson,” said Biron.

Cashall left the room, and shortly returned with the cheque in his hand. Biron examined it carefully, it was perfectly correct, and *crossed*, which of course would render it useless to a footpad or highwayman, in case, as Cashall observed he should be robbed in his way homewards.

“Then in three days I may present it.”

“Yes,” replied Cashall with the same smile of diabolical malignance.”

“You swear never to betray me?” said Cashall.

“I swear—and now farewell. I mean to walk to the inn for my horse, as it is getting

late. I do not suppose we shall have either inclination or necessity to meet again in this world?" added Biron, as he carefully buttoned up the cheque in the breast pocket of his coat."

"I think not," replied Cashall, sullenly.

It would be difficult to convey to the imagination of the reader the look of vindictive and concentrated hate with which the ex-merchant regarded the lofty form of the Count as it receded from his view.

"It had become night time, and there was no moon in the heavens."

"I wonder," muttered Mesmer, "that he gave way to my demands so easily, without even beating me down in my price, it is quite surprising conduct in a tradesman, he did not look chicken-hearted either; however, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, as they say in Coccagne—the cheque is not yet cashed. So it is half a mile to this infernal inn—I wish it were not quite so dark!"

CHAPTER X.

THE MURDERER.

“NEARLY one-fourth of my hard earned fortune gone at a single crash!”—

“No!” muttered Cashall, grinding his teeth, “I will bribe this smooth, wily fiend in a way infinitely more effectual!”

The ex-merchant was indeed wound up to a fearful pitch of excitement, the sudden and threatening accusation, the fearful death of his child, the heartless villany of his un-

relenting persecutor, the unsleeping remorse that preyed upon his mind, above all, his fury at being cowed and overcome by one who treated him at the same time with ill disguised scorn and contempt—all conspired to goad him on to the desperate resolve he had so abruptly formed.

His plan, for he formed a plan; the most desperate ruffians mingle a dash of prudence with their dare-devilism, there is a method in their madness, (what is crime but insanity!) his plan, we repeat, was simple, and apparently easy of execution. He proposed to himself to issue from a small door, of which he had the key in his pocket, at the end of the garden to run along a lane into which it opened, intercept Biron about half way between his (Cashall's) house and the public-house—there was a long dead wall, and at that time people rarely passed—and blow out the brains of our unsuspecting hero with the poker, rifle his pocket of the ill-omened cheque, and return

by the same road to the drawing-room, without anybody being aware of his absence.

To form this design, to seize the poker, to rush into the garden, careful nevertheless not to step heavily, or disturb any furniture in his passage, was the work of an instant. A man both thinks and acts quickly under the influence of excitement.

“On second thoughts,” muttered Cashall, as he paused for a moment to unlock the garden door, “I must rob him too, that suspicion may fall upon a common foot-pad—hell and damnation seize this rusty lock!”

CHAPTER XI.

THE STRUGGLE.

“ I AM glad it is over,” thought Biron
“ I detest anything that is business-like, and
I hate violence, whether physical or moral
These two thousand pounds if I get them,
which I have little doubt of, will enable me
to go on gloriously ! But I must not allow
a trifling temporary success to interfere with
the prosecution of my grand scheme.

“Gad! I am what the world would call a most consummate scoundrel. After all, there are but two lines to be pursued in ethics, either a man must centre his happiness in doing his duty to others or to himself. Now, my duty to myself appears to me by far the more paramount consideration. I am an Epicurean * — of course, every man of sense must be — nine-tenths of mankind are consciously or unconsciously devotees of that mighty creed. As for the fanatics who mortify their souls or their flesh for the sake of some absurd religion, they are either downright lunatics, or poor deluded wretches! whose faith is so strong that the conviction of a post-mortem immortality of bliss, renders their very sufferings a species of pleasure—it is the triumph of mind over matter, added Mesmer, with

* Some allowance must be made for the peculiar character of our hero, to excuse the misapplication of this so often misapplied term.

a sneer of contempt—but to resume my monologue—I am an Epicurean, and consequently the object of my life is to crowd as many agreeable sensations into the brief space of this sublunary existence, to discover and enjoy the highest intellectual and sensual delights that earth affords. Now it does not appear to me, that, yielding a blind obedience to the moral code, which time, precedent, and society have established, by any means conduces to this sacred and desirable consummation.

“ I find myself the denizen of a globe, from which, to judge by analogy, and I have no reason to suppose myself an exception to ; I am destined to be swept into oblivion at the expiration of some four score years at the utmost. I find this globe tenanted by millions of beings like myself, a few of whom monopolize the produce and goods of the earth, whilst the rest are doomed to toil laboriously for the shelter, clothing, nutriment, absolutely essen-

tial to their physical organizations, many even with their utmost exertions failing in the attempt. I find a few with minds refined by cultivation, for which their wealth has given leisure and opportunity, their corporeal being developed in all the delicacy and beauty of which it is capable, whilst the mass, from the debasing and blunting nature of their compulsory pursuits, are in mind infinitely more ignorant, prejudiced, unenlightened, in body coarse, ungainly, and inferior.

“ I regard these as simple facts, and ask myself whether these souls developed, without their opinion being asked or given on the subject, in similar organizations, gifted with the same senses and faculties, inhabitants of the same globe, have not an equal right to enjoy the delights which that globe offers, and whether, if they do not manage to participate in them, it is not the fault of their own super-eminent folly and obtuseness.”

“ Having, from superior wisdom to the

common herd, arrived at this plain conclusion, I proceeded to put my principle into practice, and what are the results?—I am Count Mesmer de Biron, the favorite of fortune, the idol of fashion, the successful lover, and, the master spirit of my age.

“ Let but *the* scheme succeed, continued the daring egotist, and what brilliant prospects reveal themselves to my prescient gaze, what object of earthly ambition will not be within the range of my hopes!

“ Now suppose I had been what the world calls a *moral* character?—I should never have burnt old Milford’s will, never have bought Colonel Hossmills house, never have obtained an introduction to society, never have been engaged to the angelic Augusta Merlmore, never have obtained a cheque for two thousand pounds from that black whiskered rascal Cashall---I should have been a poor devil of a shopkeeper, or a clerk, or enlisted as

a soldier, or gone to sea, or become---a beggar!"

At this last crisis of his ingenious train of sophistry, our ratiocinator was within a shade of becoming something still more unimportant than even that climax of his soliloquy---even than a beggar, at any rate in the opinion of a true philosopher---viz, a *dead man*. For precisely at that moment, Adolphus Cashall aimed a tremendous blow at the side of his head with a poker, which, had it taken effect as intended, would have probably killed off our exemplary hero, before he had gone half way through the second volume of his existence.

"As it was, the well-intentioned but ill-executed stroke merely swept off his hat, that beaver apex of humanity, which was carried by a playful zephyr, God knows whither, across the heath, the Egyptian darkness precluding all chance of successful pursuit, even had not its owner been so much more pressingly engaged.

Before Cashall could recover himself for a second blow, Biron had grappled with him, and having seized his unknown assailant by the throat, and feeling convinced that he was not provided with fire-arms, had little apprehension as to the event of the contest.

Cashall was a large, strong man, as tall or nearly so as Mesmer, whose frame to a superficial observer appeared rather slight and delicate than otherwise. Cashall was strong and weighty and muscular, but the nerves of Biron were like flexible steel, his fierce and unvacilating courage sent as it were streams of galvanic power through his frame. The struggle was tremendous, Cashall writhed and perspired, but the grasp of Biron tightened---the merchant's strength began to fail, he also succeeded in grasping Mesmer by the throat, but his fingers were un-nerved he made one gigantic effort and found himself dashed to the ground, stunned, and almost senseless.

Meanwhile Biron had recognized his foe-man, and at a glance of thought comprehended the object of his attack. This gave the Count great annoyance. Not on account of the attack itself or the loss of his hat, but because it tended to prove that the sacrifice of two thousand pounds was a far more serious misfortune to Cashall than he had supposed. Indeed, Biron had considerably over-rated the ex-merchant's savings, (or rather cheatings) which previous extravagance, bribes to people about him during the bankruptcy affair, and the exactions of Monville the attorney for 'dragging him through' his difficulties had materially diminished.

"I must be merciful," muttered Biron, "or I may spoil all"—and he commenced fanning the countenance of the fallen man with his handkerchief.

"Spare me!" said Cashall, huskily, "I was maddened by the suddenness, the——"

"My dear sir," said Mesmer, kindly,

“I can easily excuse the temporary derangement of your senses, and deeply regret that I should have been compelled to intrude my unfortunate business upon you, after that fearful accident. I forgive your attempt to murder me, which more for *your* sake than my own I rejoice has proved a failure—I hope you are not seriously hurt?”

“No,” said Cashall, “not much—you are right in calling it temporary derangement—I—I thank you for your forbearance.”

To say the truth, Cashall was exceedingly glad he had *not* succeeded in perpetrating so terrible a crime; and afterwards, the more he reflected upon the subject the more he saw cause to rejoice at his escape, as the chances of discovery appeared to him more and more obvious.

“And now,” said Biron, “one word before we part. To obtain this money is to me a matter of vital importance — I take no delay, no excuses; should they be offered, I shall

conclude that you are playing me false--and mark me! I do not bungle in *my* schemes of vengeance—you are a ruined and disgraced man, and a *felon*, on whose fate the laws of your country must decide!”

“But suppose,” said Cashall, timidly, half regaining his self-possession, and the habitual low cunning of his nature, “suppose I expose you in my exculpation, suppose I declare to the world our conversation of to-day.”—

“Fool!” said Mesmer, contemptuously, “do you imagine that the word of the bankrupt tradesman, the detected swindler, would weigh ought against that of the rich, the courted, the distinguished noble? What would your tale be deemed but malicious slander, when *I* told how, after tending poor Merlmore in his fearful malady with the care of a son or an affectionate brother, I gradually revived the dormant powers of his brain, and restored his shattered intellect, how then I gleaned from his disjointed conversation the

facts of the conspiracy to which his property fell victim, if not his reason, how then I came to extort by threats and reasonings a peaceful restoration of that of which he had been robbed, in preference to wasting what remained in the expences of litigation and the tardy obtaining of justice. No! it is useless for the fly to struggle in the meshes of the spider, I have you in my power, and policy bids you rather sacrifice a trifling portion than madly give up all, with name, and station, and liberty to boot. Besides this murderous assault.”——

“ But you have no witnesses ?” slyly objected the older though subordinate rascal.

“ Indeed ?” said Mesmer, drily, “ perhaps *you* did not observe that old beggar woman seated against the hedge—she must have seen all, and—but fear not my goose with golden eggs! you are perfectly safe from me, and now, go home the way you came; I need not tell you to change your clothes and keep your

counsel as to what has happened — let the cheque be paid by the time appointed, and you may not only rely upon my silence, but on my gratitude.”

“ I am much obliged.”——

“ No words, when the time comes, remember Count de Biron, meanwhile, forget that you ever beheld his form, and above all entertain no delusive idea that you have it in your power, even in the slightest degree, to injure me, or that you can attempt it, *however secretly*, without my knowledge. My eye will be ever upon you, at home or abroad, to a *Jesuit chief* all places are alike visible—
adieu !”

These last words sunk deeply into the heart of the ex-merchant, he reeled homewards as in a dream, partly from what he had heard, and partly from the effects of the fall, which had stunned him. With every inclination to betray and injure, he no longer felt any power to cope with the dark spirit he had just parted

from. Thenceforward, in his mind, Count Mesmer de Biron stood on a pinnacle of almost supernatural veneration.

Before concluding this chapter, it may not be superfluous to remark that the old beggar pointed out by Biron, as well as the Jesuitical generalship, existed nowhere, but in the fruitful imagination of our bold and unprincipled adventurer.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

“SAGO,” said Mesmer, drawing in his panting horse, as after a rapid drive, they reached Charing cross, or Trafalgar Square, as it is now called, a little before midnight; “I shall take a stroll, and walk home afterwards.”

“So saying, he threw the reins to his servant and bent his steps across the square. The cab and tiger dashed along Pall Mall, the latter

murmuring an air from Bunn's last opera, that daring fabricator of poetical doggrel---it was a ballad sung by a wandering troubadour for the amusement of some robber queen in her own royal cavern, and the first verse ran as follows:---

“Prince Belezebub dwelt in a darksome cave,
And fed upon Lucifer matches,
And warbled at night an occasional stave,
Or fragment of blasphemous catches,” &c.

“Trafalgar Square, at the time we write of--and this story is not exactly antediluvian in its date---was a vast area, surrounded by massive edifices, amongst which the royal academy of painting, an anomaly in architecture from its want of taste and proportion, occupied nearly the whole of one side. Nevertheless the dark shades of the buildings, the splashing of the fountains, the gigantic column raised to the memory of England's greatest admiral, all had a tranquilising and imposing effect upon the

mind of Mesmer, as at the midnight hour he paced along the inland pavement, and heard the echo of his footsteps die away in the distance, and mingle with the unceasing gurgle of those magnificent fountains upon which more cold water has, perhaps, been thrown by the bread-and-cheese wits of the age, than they (the fountains) have thrown up from their artesian depths since their first creation.

A dark form sat upon the edge of one of the fountains, and muttered words which the water, that faithful conveyor of sound, bore to the ears of Biron, who stood unnoticed on the opposite side of the vast, mis-shapen basin.

“Oh for the wasted days and strength of youth --- oh for the friends and opportunities I have lost ;---is it a fearful dream from which I shall awake to find myself once more a happy child, and gaze upon the well known curtains, the beloved trees, and distant hills, from the window of my little chamber, in the house of my dear kind father? or is it really true, I am

indeed the ruined orphan, without money, clothes, or home; too proud to beg, shattered in health, and now without an earthly possession, save this one poor suit of clothes? Is it possible that I have passed a whole day without food---yet I feel no hunger, but my brain seems confused, and it is night, and I---I bred in luxury---I have no home to retreat to, and must I indeed pass the night on the cold stones ---or shall I lay me beneath a tree in the Park upon the damp ground, would that I had the means of --- stay ! I will seek the bridge --- a plunge into the cold water Yet so young to die ! Oh ! is there no devil to bargain for the soul of Theodore Ramsay ---is there no Providence to save ? And the unfortunate youth turned his pale features to the heavens and the stars shone brightly as if in mockery of his wretchedness.

“ Ah ! Ramsay ! ” said a gentle voice behind him, and a hand was laid lightly on his shoulder : are you too a star gazer ? I do not think I

should find any one to sympathise with my romantic imagining. There is something in astrology, whatever the sceptics may say to it; perhaps that planet that shines just now so bright is the ruler of your destiny."

"And who are you?" said Ramsay, starting up and almost overcome by the tone of kindness, and sympathy in which the stranger spoke.

"Your good genius," replied the stranger gaily, "sitting on those damp stones would have given you your death from cold."

"I think I remember that voice," murmured the bewildered youth, gazing vaguely at the tall figure by his side.

"Remember it! *think* you remember it!—a pretty compliment to a poet, and such an excellent convivialist as myself!" replied Mesmer, in the style of humorously offended egotism.

"Ah, Count de Biron!" exclaimed Ramsay suddenly.

"The same," replied Mesmer, "and I intend

you to come and sup with me---no excuses, I hate supping alone, besides I wish to speak to you seriously, you have it in your power to render me a great service.

“Thank you,” replied Ramsay, whilst the long repressed tears started into his eyes---“I feel rather unwell.”

“Indeed---I am very sorry to hear you say so---never mind, we will take a cab, and, if you don’t feel better after supper, as I believe you live at Kensington, you had better stay at my house, there is a room at your service.”

The moment Ramsay was in the cab he fell back in the corner, and gave way to an irrepressible burst of tears.

“Your nerves are disordered my dear fellow,” said Biron, “do not try to check the relief which nature has kindly provided, you will feel better presently.”

“Excuse my weakness,” said Ramsay, “you do not know all---I---”

“Never mind now, we can talk about it after supper.”

Notwithstanding his deficient *morale*, Biron the adventurer had a great deal of delicacy of sentiment, and even a certain portion of generosity and charitable feeling at the bottom of his heart, though they but rarely succeeded in emerging from the superincumbent masses of selfishness, pride, and sensuality, by which they were overwhelmed. He understood human nature thoroughly, and had analysed with wonderful acuteness the motives, passions, fears, and sympathies of mankind---they were the levers with which he moved his world. With regard to Ramsay, his conduct was replete with the tenderest consideration of both the pride and feelings of that unfortunate personage.”

“You see, my dear Ramsay,” said Mesmer, whilst his famished guest regaled himself with some cold chicken, and other substantial sup-

ports of the human *physique*. “I wish to have a series of paintings made from some designs I have myself sketched, they are to be oval in form, and to be let into the walls of a saloon. I wish to find some young artist of talent, who will not think it a disgrace to execute the ideas of another who will also give up his whole time to them, to the exclusion of all other work, and moreover be contented with a moderate remuneration for his time. Now I have seen a picture of yours at the Suffolk Street exhibition, which extremely pleased me—by the bye, if it is not sold?”

“No,” said Ramsay, eagerly, “it is not sold.”

“Well then it must be mine at any price—but to resume, will you paint these designs for me, there are four of them, in yonder portfolio. I cannot afford to give more than a hundred guineas.”

“Most willingly,” replied Ramsay, “I have nothing to do at present—allow me to look at the sketches.”

“If it would not be disagreeable to you, I should like you to stay here whilst you painted them, I would have a studio fitted up, and I could see the progress you made.”

“Very true, and might suggest any improvements,” said Ramsay, who was quite bewildered with his sudden good fortune.

“What do you think of my sketches?”

“That they are very beautiful, but very strange.”

“You see what they are meant for—the morning dawn in spring, mid-day in summer, sunset in autumn, and a moon-light night in winter—the four seasons, and the four epochs of the day—with the four ages of man in the fore-ground.”

“Excellent!” said Ramsay, gazing with surprise, and a sort of involuntary admiration upon the fantastic drawings before him.”

“Then it is settled you remain here to night as it is so late, and you look unwell, and to-

morrow you establish yourself *chez moi* altogether. Of course you will make yourself quite at home, order what you like, and above all do not hurry the paintings. An artist should never work but when he feels inclined."

"My dear Count, how can I express my gratitude."

"Gratitude! for what? I ought to be much obliged to *you* for condescending to copy my water colour daubs."

"Stay! I must tell you all, you do not know from what an abyss of misery you have saved me."

"No, no, go to bed now, you look pale and exhausted; to-morrow we will talk matters over—good night!"

"Good night—God reward you for your kindness!"

"Sago! show Mr. Ramsay to his room. By Jove," muttered Mesmer, as soon as he was left alone, "this accident will save me a world of trouble. I could not have found a

better subject, he *must* be susceptible of the influence, and by becoming his benefactor, his saviour from destruction, perhaps death and even suicide. I weave such chains around him that even if it should be necessary to reveal the secret to him—but before I make him an accomplice, he must be tried, tested, tempted, as never yet was man by devil! and now for Clara!” So saying Mesmer quitted the house, and walked rapidly towards the lodgings of his mistress.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EXPERIMENT.

WHEN Theodore Ramsay awoke the next morning, he for some minutes felt an indistinct conviction that what he saw and remembered was but one of those peculiar states of dreamy delusion which so vividly assimilate to reality, and that he should presently again, and actually, awake to find himself in the miserable garret he had recently inhabited; but no,

there stood the mahogany washing-stand, with its marble fittings, the large toilette-glass, the roomy chest of drawers, the clean, white muslin curtains, the soft carpets—all persevering in their opaqueness, and, absolutely, solid and material existence. It was useless his straining his eyes, they would *not* vanish ; so that at last he was reluctantly compelled to yield to the irresistible evidence of his senses.

By degrees all the facts of his position appeared, in lucid arrangement, to his mind, and he felt his heart overflow with gratitude towards his generous host, and for the first time for many months, poured forth a heartfelt prayer to a merciful and beneficent God.

“ I wonder what the time is !” thought Ramsay, “ the sun is shining brightly, an omen of a favourable change in my fortunes ; it must be time to rise, I have slept soundly in this luxurious bed, and I was very tired.

Ah ! what is that ? a note upon the dressing-table, directed to me, too."

He seized the note, tore open the envelope, and drew forth a bank-note for ten pounds, and a slip of paper containing the following lines :—

"Excuse my freedom ; you may require a few pounds to prepare for my paintings, and young artists are rarely overburthened with ready money. Consider this an instalment upon the price of your picture. We will dine *teté-à-tete* at six o'clock to-day, if you are not better engaged, meanwhile the servants will shew you your future studio, and you can, if you like, send for your *materia artistica* and commence putting things in order !"

"This Count de Biron is a patron worth having ; there seems no limits to his liberality, and he does everything in such an easy, gentlemanly way, that all appearance of obligation is avoided. How lucky that I did not accept the offer of Desmond !"

So saying, Ramsay proceeded to the completion of his toilette.

And here we must pause for a moment in our narrative to give a brief outline of the previous history of Theodore Ramsay. His father was a selfish and extravagant man, and left, at his death, more debts than money to his widow, who shortly afterwards followed her husband to the grave. Little Theodore, who was at that time scarcely ten years old, was taken care of by a near relative of some property, but he having a family of his own, and, therefore, unwilling to incur the expense of pushing his *protégé* forward in a profession, obtained for him, through the interest of an influential member of the government party, a clerkship in a public office, which, within two months afterwards Theodore, who inherited his father's virtues, without assigning any reason resigned, thereby drawing upon himself the indignation of his patron and the displeasure of all his friends. He then took

to landscape painting, for which he possessed, and from childhood evinced considerable natural talent, and having the luck to sell two or three of the pictures, led for some months a very merry, careless, and agreeable sort of life. But his money was soon spent ; he was then compelled to borrow of his friend, Harry Scales, who was of a generous and humane disposition, until that artist became seriously annoyed at the constant demands upon his purse, for sums, which, though trifling in amount, he could ill afford to give away, and he neither demanded nor anticipated a return.

Still Ramsay continued his career of thoughtless extravagance, until he found himself reduced to the necessity of pledging, one after another, every article of value he possessed. At length he was compelled to part with his clothes, and on the evening that he was encountered by Mesmer, at the fountain,

had just been turned out of the humble apartment he tenanted, on account of the long arrears of rent owing to his landlady, who witnessed with dismay and well founded apprehension, the rapid diminution of his wardrobe, which, in fact, as he had stated, now consisted of but a single suit—*minus*, however, a waistcoat, which, as the weather was warm, he had found it convenient to dispense with some days, previous.

Having tied his blue satin opera-tie with something of the pride of by-gone months (for with these precocious rakes one is obliged to reckon by lunar, in place of solar revolutions) and buttoned his bottle-green surtout to the throat, in order to conceal the absent waistcoat and the shirt of three days' wear. He surveyed his accurately cut black trousers and boots of perfect fit, now glittering in renovated polish, to which they had for nearly a week past been almost utter strangers with

reviving satisfaction, and descended the stairs to the breakfast-room, where the hissing urn and well-spread table formed a delightful contrast to the moving scenes of his recent sufferings.

“Is there anything else you would like, sir?” said the footman.

“Nothing, thank you,” said Ramsay, attacking a tongue, “is the Count de Biron down yet?”

“He is not at home, sir, and will not be back until dinner time.”

“Oh, very well.”

Before Biron went out he had directed the servants to pay Ramsay every attention—

“He is a young artist of distinction,” said he, “and a very great friend of mine, so let him be treated with every respect and attention.”

“Well,” said the boy *roué*, “this is a strange

freak of fortune ; yesterday a beggar, without a home to go to, or a shilling in my pocket—to-day, a rising artist, patronised by one of the most fashionable men in London, with the run of his house, and employment for the next six months at the least—I don't despair of success even now !”

In the course of the afternoon Ramsay had redeemed his clothes from the pawnbroker's, set up his easel in the room allotted to him as a studio, and began to feel himself at home in his new quarters.

At six o'clock precisely, Biron returned to dinner, during which he chiefly led the conversation to topics of the passing hour and the pictures to be painted by Ramsay ; who, on his part having, in the interim, rallied his pride beneath the sunshine of his good fortune, contented himself with a general allusion to his embarrassed position without entering into that full confidence which in the

fervour of his gratitude he had at first resolved and intended to have made to his benefactor.

Biron observed this with a smile at the rapid influence of circumstances, and as he was already aware of the main points of the story, felt by no means anxious for a detailed account of miseries ever disagreeable to dwell upon, and from which, in the present instance, he could derive neither personal benefit nor useful information. His treatment of Theodore Ramsay was marked with consummate art, carefully avoiding all allusion to the difference of their relative stations in the world, he conversed with a freedom and friendliness which completely captivated his young auditor; at the same time he spoke to Ramsay as if he had been a man of his own age, instead of a mere youth—a boy—scarcely eighteen, and we all know how flattering this apparent forgetfulness is to young people of that class. And yet Mesmer contrived to make his companion

feel and comprehend the superiority of his intellect by an occasional burst of eloquence, a skilful turn of argument, or a quietly imparted piece of instruction, in which his greater knowledge and experience were asserted without dogmatism or pretension. The young painter felt his own shallowness in comparison with the profundity of his entertainer, and learnt by degrees to look up to him for advice, and to respect him without feeling either annoyance or envy at his superiority.

Mesmer played his cards well ; not that his good will towards Ramsay was entirely feigned, he had taken a slight interest in the young artist from the first time he had met him at Scales's rooms ; and though principally determined upon making him his tool in the daring enterprise he had formed, was really disposed to render him some assistance in return.

They did not sit long over their wine, and on adjourning to the drawing-room, Biron took

up a magazine and was soon, to all appearance, deeply buried in its contents. Seeing this, Ramsay followed his example, and turned listlessly over the pages of a book of poems, by Cecelia Darcy, lying on the table.

Meanwhile the eyes of Mesmer rested upon the image of his companion, in the glass opposite, with persevering intensity.

Ramsay became restless, he fidgetted on his chair, he took up several books, and laid them down again; he groaned, he blew his nose, he changed his attitude with nervous discomfort.

"I feel very drowsy," said he at length, "I think I had better go to bed, or I shall go to sleep here."

"Very likely," said Biron, "you were up late last night. Good night."

"Good night," said Ramsay with an additional yawn.

"Ha ha!" laughed Biron, "it *works* well—

the angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection—my great namesake was right—the influence *can* be reflected—I think this boy will answer my purpose. In a few weeks it is to be hoped the great experiment may be tried !”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHEQUE.

THE three days had elapsed, and with difficulty maintaining his customary external tranquillity, Biron threw himself into a cab, and directed the driver to convey him with all possible speed to a certain banking house, in Lombard-street, at which the cheque he had received from Cashall was made payable.

With nervous impatience, he sprang from

the vehicle, and entered the door of the banking house. There were many people there waiting to pay in, or receive money, and Mesmer was obliged to await his turn, occupying the ten minutes of leisure thus afforded, with reflections upon the slowness of the grave and systematic clerks, by no means conducive to the eventual salvation of those worthy and industrious personages. At length his turn came ; some books were consulted, a drawer and a pocket-book peeped into, a whisper exchanged between two of the clerks, and Biron received the welcome intelligence that the money *had* been paid. He departed richer, by two thousand pounds, than he came. His anxiety was calmed, his mind was at rest, and he returned home in excellent humour with himself and all the rest of the world.

On regaining his house he found a letter for him, which, without troubling himself about postmark or direction, or indulging in any of those fruitless and time-wasting con-

jectures as to the “ whence and from whom ?” whereby people are wont to tantalise themselves, and playfully delay the indulgence of their own laudable curiosity, he at once tore open and read as follows :—

“ DEAR SIR,

“ It may have possibly occurred to your speculative mind to make a similar demand from Mr. Monville, to that you have levied upon myself. This, allow me to observe, would be very unadvisable, as he is, I have every reason to believe, extremely embarrassed in his circumstances, indeed, upon the verge of ruin. Any attempt, therefore, of the kind might lead to results certainly not advantageous to yourself, and possibly most dangerously unpleasant in their consequences.

“ I am, dear sir,

“ Yours truly,

“ ADOLPHUS CASHALL.”

“The warning was not required,” thought Biron, “nevertheless, I am rejoiced to see this Cashall sufficiently resigned to his loss to think of the risk of other contingencies. I will write him a line in reply”—

“SIR,

“I received your letter, and believe you are quite right with regard to the person you allude to.

“Yours &c.,

“JOHNSON.”

“There—I think there is no danger in that—I make it a rule never to commit myself in writing. It is not very important what one says to an individual without witnesses, as it can always be denied, contradicted, or qualified as occasion may require, but ink and paper are not to be trifled with, and now to dress

for the horticultural *fête*, and the divine Augusta—mine she must be, at any price, and if the great scheme fails, I must either lose my imaginary fortune in a speculation, or run away with the heiress—perhaps both !”

CHAPTER XV.

FEMALE AMBITION.

AMID the brilliant crowds with which the gardens were thronged, Augusta Merlmore hung upon the arm of her betrothed, and dreamed of love and happiness, eternal and unchanging. With all her sportive wit and liveliness of temperament, she was gifted with the highest sensibility, and the most intense feeling. In Biron she saw the highest per-

fection of which man is capable! in person and talents she beheld him without an equal, and could not sufficiently congratulate herself upon her fortune in being selected as a wife by so incomparable a man.

If there was one point in his character that displeased her, it was his apparent devotion to a life of uninterrupted ease and Sybarite pleasure. His seeming indifference to all objects which excited the ambition of those around him, his occasional expressions of contempt with regard to the bustling politicians, literati, lawyers, &c., they encountered. Little did she dream of the complicated and daringly adventurous schemes which day and night occupied the thoughts of her smooth-browed lover. But Mesmer had learned to divide as it were his being, and to raise a barrier between the life of his intellect and that of his sensations. He had acquired, a double identity, a separate, internal and external existence. On the one hand he was

the unprincipled schemer, the wily impostor, the evil genius in its loneliness without sympathy or confidant. On the other the frank, amusing companion, the ardent and devoted lover, the gay young nobleman, the clear-sighted man of the world. On the one hand he was the arch deceiver, the eternally plotting Alfred Milford. On the other the careless, the enjoying, the social Count Mesmer de Biron. In the former state he looked upon himself as the placeman at his bureau, the counsel at his chambers, the tradesman at his metier. In the latter the honest, industrious individual, taking his pleasure as a matter of course, and a lawful and just recompence for his toil.

“Has it ever occurred to you, Mesmer,” said Augusta, “to follow up any career?”

“Never,” replied Biron, “and why, dearest, should I wish to do so?”

“All men have some occupation.”

“So have I—I love, is that not enough?”

“But I mean some pursuit which leads to eminence in the world.”

“ Does my present position appear to you so insignificant ? ”

“ I was not thinking of rank or fortune, but of an honourable ambition, which desires to be useful and beneficial to mankind.”

“ What, for instance ? ”

“ There are a thousand things that with your knowledge, talent, and genius, might be effected ! ”

“ *Par exemple ?* ”

“ Well then, since you improvise so beautifully, you might write a book—”

“ Of poems, do you mean ?—did I not write the ‘ Vestiges ? ’ ”

“ No, seriously ? ” exclaimed Augusta.

“ I mean the burlesque.”

“ Ah ! but I wish you to produce an original work.”

“ I thought that original enough---well is it to be prose or verse ? ”

“ Poetry or prose, no matter which, I am sure it would be both delightful to read and ”—

“ Beneficial to the human race ? ”

“ Yes,” said Augusta, with a flush of

enthusiasm, a single poem has often worked more real good than a hundred sermons."

"And more harm," rejoined Biron.

"Well I wish you would try --- to please me."

"Your last argument, dear Augusta, is quite irresistible. I am convinced, and will order my servants to fit up one of the garrets for my accommodation to-morrow. Is there any thing else, queen of my soul, that you would wish me to do for the sake of an honourable ambition?"

"Yes," replied Augusta, smiling, "you are so eloquent, that it would be a pity you should not display your abilities in parliament."

"For the benefit of the human race, likewise, I suppose," said Mesmer, "well, *restez tranquille mon ange!* I will become a senator at the earliest opportunity."

"It is a pity that your title is not English, or you would sit in the upper house, without the trouble and expense of an election."

“ The defect may be remedied, I will obtain a peerage all in good time, oh, most ambitious lady! and now I think we have built enough castles in the air for one while—it feels positively quite oppressive.”

“ I wish they were more than *chateaux en Espagne*,” said Augusta, almost with a sigh, I wish you were serious but in some part of what you have said.”

“ Then, beloved! your wish is granted I *was* serious in everything I said: to please you, I am willing to resign my dream of ease and luxury, and to write books, make speeches, and intrigue for peerages. But mind I do it all to please you, and would do a thousand times more to prove how deeply, how passionately, and how sincerely I love you.”

“ *Dear* Mesmer, I would not, for the world, that you should sacrifice, to my silly, girlish fancy, your own, doubtless, better judgment. Believe me, I am not so selfish——”

“ No, Augusta, I am convinced that you

are right, what I have said I have said—Ah! here is the Prince de Rosenberg and Friskerton.

Aurelius looked pale and careworn as he greeted Miss Merlmore and her betrothed, but he forced a smile, which to the unobservant, would have passed for genuine, and made a few commonplace remarks upon the fineness of the weather, the company, the fruit, and the flowers, with apparent nonchalance.

“ I suppose, Biron,” said Lord Friskerton, “ that you have heard that the Duke of Gamblesbury and Desmond are on their way to Babylon.”

“ Indeed ?”

“ Yes, I advised them to call at Croydon fair on their road, and buy a second-hand caravan of the wild beast proprietor. And Harry Scales, by the way, is to be married next month, and oddly enough, Miss Darcy turns out an heiress.”

“ I am delighted to hear it,” said Augusta, with the enthusiasm of friendship, “ how does it happen ?”

“ An old aunt by marriage, only it appears has gone to heaven, and, in the most unexpected manner, left all her property on earth to Miss Darcy.”

As the prince turned away with his companion, Aurelius threw a sad but penetrating glance at the countenance of Augusta, unobserved by either her or her lover.

“ I wonder whether she will be happy !” said the prince, musingly.

“ Who ?” said Lord Friskerton.

“ Augusta Merlmore.”

“ Why should she not, I am sure Biron is a most amiable and agreeable fellow. They are both young, beautiful, and rich.”

“ True,” said Aurelius, “ but there is something mysterious, I might almost say, sinister, about Biron at times, which makes me doubt whether he would carry into domestic life,

that suavity and frankness, which seems his characteristic in mere social relations."

"You do not know him as I do," said Friskerton, "he has an excellent heart, but there is one very odd thing about him—he seems to have no relations."

"The greater his good luck," said Aurelius, "*mine* are the plague of my life, every post from Germany brings me letters full of the most unreasonable requests, which nevertheless, it is almost as unpleasant to refuse as to concede; how I envy him!"

"Well, I believe you are right," said Friskerton, "at any rate, he will marry relations enough with his wife that is to be."

"Suppose we take an ice, I am horribly thirsty."

"With all my heart."

Now Mesmer, although he had hitherto succeeded in evading, felt that he could not any longer avert more specific explanation as to his circumstances, prospects, and future

intentions, than he had hitherto accorded to his father-in-law ; he had accordingly avoided as much as possible all *tetê-à-têtes* with Mr. Merlmore, and had now in fact determined not to see him, if possible, again, until the success of his scheme was decided one way or the other, and he had made up his mind as to the course it would be advisable to pursue.

“ My dear Augusta,” said he, “ in furtherance of this design, I am obliged to leave town to-morrow for a week or ten days, upon business of the utmost importance ; when I return, I hope that an early day will be fixed for our union.”

He said this, as after spending the evening at Merlmore's, he was about to take his departure, and imprinting a lover's kiss upon the pouting lips of his affianced, he hastened away, whilst the sensitive girl, whose happiness was wholly wrapt up in his society, with

difficulty refrained from bursting into a flood of tears.

“ I think I can guess what the count is going out of town about,” said Merlmore to his wife, as soon as they were alone.

“ What, my dear?” said Mrs. Merlmore, with lego-maternal curiosity.

“ To look at the —— estate, which is to be sold by auction next Friday.”

“ But that would not occupy him a week or ten days.”

“ Very true—by the way, it has occurred to me, that as the Count de Biron has such an enormous sum in the funds, it would not be a bad plan for me to borrow seven or eight thousand pounds from him at three and a half per cent, and pay off the old mortgage of five thousand upon the Merlmore estate, which I was fool enough to raise at five. Eh, my dear, it would give us a couple of thousand pounds or so to pay our debts, and go on with without making any difference in our income?”

“ I think it would be a most excellent plan,” said Mrs. Merlmore, solemnly, “ do it by all means.”

“ There is an old adage,” said Merlmore, “ relative to the advisability of first catching your hare——”

Well, we will not continue this conversation how mortals calculate, and how they are disappointed in their calculations.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAGICIAN.

“WHAT need of necromancy !” exclaimed Mesmer, half aloud, “what need of magic spells, and wizard bonds, signed with the votary’s crimson blood, to the dark spirits of the abyss, whilst nature, bounteous, mysterious, parent, offers such mighty, such gigantic powers subservient to human mind, and man !

“O, ye unhappy alchemists of the olden time, who dwelling in dark places, to elude the eye of priestly power and bigotry, shrinking from the sight of your fellows like criminals and out-

laws, sought, vainly, to discover, in the senseless clods of matter, that which the bold and subtile spirit so easily creates; who bending over the unhealthy crucibles, inhaling sulphureous and mercurial vapours, cherished the dull flame of the midnight furnace, melting a thousand minerals, and analysing innumerable substances, without turning your thoughts inward to the infinitely more profitable resources of your own minds; without once dreaming of, or suspecting the existence of, an alchemy, by which the whole nature of man is changed and metamorphosed; when the soul half bursting from its clay intuitively penetrates the truth of the present, and tears the veil from the mysteries of the future!

“What sorcerer could desire a greater power than this? and *I* who have done---could have done so much by the mere energy and craft of a free and fearless soul, with *such* a power, *such* an engine at my disposal! O, Giles de Retz could thy spectre pay a visit once again to the

regions of mortality, thou wouldst indeed view with rage and vexatious gnashing of teeth (if that ghosts *have* teeth) a comparatively penniless adventurer, on the verge of realizing by the mere exercise of a determined will, and an unscrupulous mind that which with all thy wealth, thy crimes, and labors eluded thy ambitious grasp, and brought thee to a fiery and untimely martyrdom !*

The eyes of Mesmer flashed with an infernal radiance, as he uttered these words, and he gazed lovingly on the books and pamphlets with which the table before him was heaped.

They all related to the same subject—*magnetism* ; and it was in the study of this wondrous science that he had found his philosopher's stone, his lever of Archimedes, wherewith to move the world.

Many years ago he had taken an interest in

* Giles de Re tzwas burnt for sorcery at Nantes. See Leich Richie's novel, "The Magician," for further account of the character of this singular being.

this study, so often jested or laughed at, thoughtlessly ridiculed, and ignorantly denied, by the herd of commonplace, commonsense people whose limited ideas and uninquiring minds so strongly prejudice them against everything that is novel.

This incredulity of the vulgar was to Biron a source of the greatest satisfaction, he cared not a straw for the establishment of the truth of Magnetism, enough for him that by its means he could accomplish the end he had in view. Indeed nobody with whom he was acquainted, suspected for an instant that he took any serious interest in the matter, and, of late, his observations, if ever they had referred to the magnetic science were of a slighting and indifferent character.

But in reality the experiments which on several occasions Mesmer had witnessed at the house of Prince de Rosenberg, with whom he had become to a certain extent intimate, had suggested to his mind ideas, and designs of the

most extraordinary and audacious character. He resumed his former theoretical studies, collected together every work of importance on the subject, took every opportunity of witnessing experiments without attracting notice, and in a short time became as deeply conversant with everything, in the remotest degree relating to magnetism, as the most noted mesmerists of the day. But whilst they, chiefly animated by a desire to promote science and investigate truth, laboured to cure the sick, and by writings and experiments to convince the world of the truth of their facts, and the inestimable benefits to be derived from the science they cultivated, Mesmer, despite his illustrious name, in silence and in secret pursued his lonely path, animated by no less powerful hopes of selfish ambition, and inordinate personal aggrandisement. Nay, he even went so far as secretly to transmit to several journals satirical articles on Mesmerism, full of the bitterest sarcasms, and most poignant ridicule, which did infinitely more

harm to the rising science than all the dull, illogical arguments of certain opposition, medical reviews, and the drivelling cant of a set of scribbling religious fanatics who could not bear the thought of their beloved miracles, being brought within the pale of every day possibility, and accounted for by the existence of a simple principle of nature. And yet they acknowledge the existence of gravitation, centrifugal force, electricity, &c., and are these principles of nature a whit more comprehensible than magnetism?

It is our place as a faithful historian to narrate facts, not to strive to make converts to any theory to which we may have occasion to allude. But we must confess that the generally prevailing incredulity on the subject of magnetism surprises us beyond measure. We do not however know a single person who ever attempted, fairly, to investigate the matter without being convinced of the truth. The only

wonder is that so few people do take the trouble to investigate : and yet what more easy, what more open to experiment ? All that is necessary is an elementary work upon the subject* and man or woman, girl or boy to experimentalise upon. And to what grand results do magnetic experiments, properly understood, lead the mind of a thinker and a philosopher !

The soul seeing without eyes, hearing without words, what can be more convincing of the spiritual and inrate nature of the senses and faculties, of the independence of ' the divine particle ' of the organism it animates. Go dull materialists ! men without minds, curious pieces of clockwork wound up for years instead of hours, we *have* souls, aye immortal souls, in spite of all your obstinate attempts to annihilate

*Teste's 'Manual of Practical Magnetism,' is one of the best we know of.

them.* But this is not the time for such lucubrations, on another occasion we may send into the world a few pages on this all important theme, in the meantime we will return to our history.

*See Colquhoun's translation of Wienholt's lectures in which some of the amusing delusions of the *cerebrationists* are ingeniously exposed. See also appendix to vol. 1.—Phrenology.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PREPARATION.

“How do you feel to day Ramsay?” said Biron, as he entered the young painter’s studio.

“A little better, I think,” replied the artist, who looked pale and ill, and whose hand shook nervously as he applied his brush to the yet scarcely covered canvass.

“You had better let me magnetise you again to day perhaps.”

“ But do you think that it is really good for me?

“ Not a doubt of it, this neuralgic affection of yours, will soon disappear under the magnetic influence---sit down in that arm chair and look at me.”

Ramsay did as he was bidden, and Biron, who ascribed all to the effects of *will*, and therefore abjured all passes or other gesticulations, merely stationed himself opposite the patient, and fixed his eyes upon those of Ramsay with a calm and fixed expression, which, in a few minutes, exercised a most wonderful effect upon the latter.

His eyelids quivered convulsively, his face became paler, and in less than five minutes he fell back asleep.

Biron still continued his gaze for some time afterwards, and called to him in a gentle voice by his name---no answer---he waited a few minutes, and repeated the name. Ramsay sat up and opened his eyes, but as in the case we

have already described, they were fixed and glassy.

Mesmer then proceeded to ask him various questions, to all of which he gave very rational replies. He then caused him to read a letter through another sheet of paper, and to walk with him about the room, and finally, having first tried several other curious experiments he produced several packs of cards, and commenced dealing them after the manner of a *croupier* at a gaming table, asking Ramsay each time, before dealing, which would be the winning card ; with scarcely an exception the *clair-voyant* was right in his decision, and the delight of Biron was evident in every line of his features.

At length he awoke the somnambulist and asked him whether he remembered anything of what had passed.

"Nothing whatever," replied Ramsay in his usual tone.

"How do you feel?"

"Calmer, better altogether."

“Suppose we go to the opera, I have taken a box you know for the rest of the season.”

“I shall be delighted.”

But this was not the first time that Ramsay had been thrown into the magnetic trance. Day after day Biron repeated his experiments, until at length he thought that the decisive hour had arrived, and prepared for the great experiment, so often hinted at, and alluded to, and concerning which the reader, if such be his desire, may obtain ample elucidation in the next chapter of our history.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GAMBLING HOUSE.*

THE chandeliers burnt brightly in the gorgeous saloons, and the polished mirrors reflected alike the forms of the rich, the titled, the distinguished, and those of the ruined desperado, and the needy adventurer. Men of all nations thronged the brilliant apartments, the smirking Frenchman, and the grave Spaniard, the *legère* Italian, and the stiff Englishman, women

*See appendix.

too, there were, young and beautiful, old and ugly, all there to seek the transitory and feverish excitement of the green cloth covered table and the blind goddess fortune. Some quaffed in haste, to slake their burning thirst, the iced champagne punch so plentifully offered; others stood abstractedly, and calculated for the hundredth time some delusive series based on the imaginary law of chances, a few paused to risk a napoleon or two at the childish game of roulette, but by far the greater number crowded round the tables at which *rouge et noir* was played with eager eyes, and cards to prick the chances with, and hearts beating high with covetous aspirations—by Lucifer! they are but as the rest, who court ambition, trade, finance, all gamblers—though by some the game may be prolonged from the cradle to the tomb, whilst *these* prefer to know at once their fate and simplify the principle of human struggles. Such was the scene in one of the first gambling houses in Paris, in the year of the Hegira —

At one of the tables were seated two individuals whose extraordinary good luck as it was termed, excited at once the envy, and astonishment of the spectators, and the dismay of the *banquier* who stood an unobserved looker on, and beheld with horror the constant success of the two gamblers, whose luck was only equalled by the imperturbable *sang froid*, with which they swept up their winnings. Neither of them were *habitués* of the place, on the contrary, nobody had ever seen them there before. They had entered the room, taken the first vacant seats of the table, and in a short time commenced playing for the very highest stakes, with a silent devotion to the game, yet utter freedom from all excitement or anxiety as to the result---unusual even in *professional* gamblers.

The elder of the two was a tall man, somewhat corpulent, and in appearance, between thirty and forty years of age, his hair was tinged with grey, bushy, and stunted, a grey

mustache adorned his upper lip, and he wore a pair of broad-rimmed spectacles, behind which flashed a pair of eyes so large, dark, and brilliant, as scarcely to seem in need of any assistance from the handywork of the optician. His dress was somewhat *outrè*, and he wore a massive gold chain rather ostentatiously displayed, as well as a variety of rings upon his fingers. He had a habit of wrinkling his forehead by incessantly elevating his eyebrows, and a bright red flush upon his cheeks, and on the tip of his nose seemed to indicate---that he was not averse to the worship of Bacchus, in spite of the present calm deliberation of his manner.

His companion appeared very young, though it was difficult to judge of his physiognomy, on account of a large green shade which he wore over his eyes, and the great size of his shirt collar which on either side reached nearly to his ears; he was dressed in fashionable style,

and was of a thin figure, and shorter stature than the elder gambler.

These two persons evidently played in partnership, and although the taller of the two invariably bought the counters, and took up the money, it was remarked that he but rarely interfered in the management of the game, and that generally with ill success, and to the evident vexation of his companion. At length he entirely ceased to meddle with the other's play, merely taking care that none of the actual coins should come in contact with the fingers of his friend. Meanwhile he of the green shade continued to play without rule or system, calmly pushing the stakes from *rouge* to *noir* and from *noir* to *rouge* with an instinctive sagacity, which astonished the banker and the dealers, and in spite of the absorbing interest in their own games, by degrees, attracted even the attention of the other gamblers.

“Faites votre jeu, messieurs !”

“ *Rouge* wins — *sacre bleu* ! are they never to lose ?”

“ What extraordinary luck !” murmured an old officer with hard, weather-beaten features, who had lost all his money, and was reluctantly reduced to be a mere spectator instead of an actor in the scene before him.

“ *Faites votre jeu !*” said the *croupier*.

“ Another hundred napoleons—quick—stay, two hundred in counters !”

“ ‘*cré nom de Dieu* ! it is incredible !”

“ *Peste* ! if I had brought another thousand *livres* with me ! muttered the officer.”

“ Again ! *vraiment c’est miraculeux*.”

“ *Carrajo* !” murmured a Spaniard.

“ *Bismillah* !” quoth a Turk.

“ *Blitz Donner Wetter noch einmal* !” growled a German.

“ *Corpo di Bacco* !” an Italian.

“ Damnation !” swore an Englishman, as once more *noir* proved the winner.

Nine times the *noir* had won !—without a

symptom of hesitation the calm player pushed the accumulated stakes to the *rouge* side of the table. A smile of triumph illumined the countenance of his companion—three times *rouge* was victorious—the player with the green shade once more transferred his confidence to *noir*—another moment, the eyes of the elder gambler rest like basilisks upon the dealer—*noir* wins! and the bank is broken!

At that moment the player with the green shade gave a stifled groan, his limbs became rigid, he slipped from his chair, before his companion, who was stuffing the notes into his capacious pockets, could stretch out his arm to assist him, and fell heavily to the ground.

“Over excitement,” said one.

“Reaction,” said another.

“A glass of water,” said a third.

But the stout player hastily stooped down and touched the face and limbs of his comrade with something he held in his hand—apparently a large door key—he revived—he raised himself

upon his elbow, pushed back the green shade from his eyes, and gazed vacantly around him.

“Where am I, what is ——”

He stopped abruptly, the eyes of his friend who had pushed back his spectacles upon his forehead, rested for a moment upon his face, he gave vent to another stifled groan, and sank back insensible.

The elder gambler raised him in his arms, and laid him upon one of the luxurious sofas with which the rooms were surrounded.

“My friend is subject to these fits,” said he hastily, and with an English accent “he will be well directly,” and in truth the younger gamester soon sat up and opened his eyes though with a strange and vacant expression.

His friend pulled the green shade over his eyes, and muttered something about ‘weakness, and the strong light’ for the benefit of the people who crowded about them.

“Can you walk now?” said he.

“Yes” replied the young man, “I can.”

Thereupon the two successful gamblers quitted the saloons of ——— together, the younger leaning upon the arm of the elder, at the door they entered a fiacre.

“*Hotel du Diable!*” said he of the spectacles—and away they rattled.

“Who were they?”

“Nobody could tell!”

“Lucky *anglais!*”

“*Sacrés animalux!*”

“They were *his* eyes I could swear,” said an Englishman of a meagre and cadaverous aspect, though not naturally ill-looking.

“Whose?” enquired a Frenchman by his side.

“The devil’s!” replied the Englishman, sharply, not being aware that he had spoken aloud.

“These English are all alike.”

“I do not understand it”—muttered the cadaverous Englishman, as he walked away. If it *is* he—why this disguise—but *if* it be—he

has been the cause of my ruin, he has baffled my schemes—Oh! could I be revenged!—all other hope is vanished!” The light of a lamp, which, at this moment, he passed, fell full upon the countenance of Monville, the attorney.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURN.

“ So far good !” murmured Biron as he was whirled along upon the road, from Paris to Boulogne, behind four post horses whose postillions were ‘ doing their possible,’ under the influence of francs abundantly promised. Mesmer de Biron was in disguise and alone.

“ So far so good—my toils are over ; happen

what may—a man is always something who has more than fifty thousand pounds at command, yet what is fifty thousand, or ten times fifty thousand pounds to *me*, possessed of the secret of exhaustless wealth !

“ Still it is vexatious that after succeeding so gloriously at Aix and Wiesbaden, this infernal accident should have happened I allowed myself to be carried away by the triumph of the moment, and the touch of those accursed Napoleons threw him into the cataleptic—bah ! that was nothing, but his waking—that single glance around—he might have been made to believe it all a dream—I could almost regret—but no ! repentance is folly—the past is irrevocable !

“ Let me look forward to the delights that await me—power, splendour, fashion—Augusta. An estate must be bought ; I must make myself popular in the county, get into the house, and—but we live in the

present — and I suppose we stop here to dinner.”

On arriving at his house in — street, the Count, no longer in disguise, went straight to the studio of his youthful *protegè*, Ramsay, and gazed upon the half finished painting on the easel with a smile of gloomy and peculiar meaning.

He rung the bell; Sago replied to the summons.

“ Let this room be restored to its former state without delay.”

“ Mr. Ramsay, then will not return to complete the development of his artistic production sir ?” said the sententious valet.

“ He will never return to this house at my desire ; let it be done at once.”

“ Very well sir,”

“ And light me a fire in the library.”

“ Yes sir.”

“ It feels chilly, or I have caught cold

on my way from Devonshire!" said Biron rubbing his hands as the servant announced that the fire had been lighted according to his wishes.

Sago stared and shrugged his shoulders as he left the room. It was a sultry day in autumn, which would not have disgraced the dog days. Biron repaired to the library.

Having first bolted the door, he drew from his pocket a packet of papers and a small brown paper parcel. The former contained the passport, cards, and a few letters and papers of one Joseph Smithson, merchant. The latter, on being opened, revealed to the eye a grey wig and a pair of broad-rimmed spectacles, all which Mesmer consigned to the flames, and carefully watched until not a vestige of them retained their original form.

He then took his hat, went out, and without requiring as might have been supposed, the presence of his own vehicle, repaired to his

banker, broker, and solicitor, (a highly respectable firm in the Temple) with each of whom he remained a short time—the Count had a clear head for business---after which he dined at his club, and finally took tea at the Merlmore's, to the inexpressible joy of Augusta, who had been in the sulks for the last fortnight---that is to say, ever since he left town, had teased her mother almost to death, and broken seven strings of the piano forte.

“ And where have you been all this time ?”

“ Oh ! I have been terribly busy looking at places to be sold, and hunting over papers. To-morrow I must be off again to —— shire, to look at the Wilsdown estate, which is to be sold immediately, and will just suit me, I imagine ; what say you, Augusta, to being Lady of Wilsdown Castle ?”

“ The name is charming.”

“ And romantic---well, I think it will do it is a fine old place, I hear.”

“ Nothing like the landed interest for power and influence,” said Merlmore.

“ And nothing like ready money for enjoyment !” laughed Biron, “ by the bye, will you go down with me to look at the place to-morrow ?”

“ How do we get down ?”

“ By railway ; a couple of hours, and half an hour’s drive afterwards.”

“ Ah ! those railways have spoilt all rational travelling.”

“ They are a phase in the developing of the human race.”

“ A link in the chain of necessity.”

“ Come and see my last new drawing,” said Augusta.

“ Where is it ?”

“ In the next room.”

“ Here, look, what do you think of it ?”

“ That your beautiful curls, falling over the paper, throw rather too much *chiaro*

oscura over the subject ; I must kiss them aside."

" Mesmer !"

" Dearest Augusta, shall it be this day month ?"

" This day——"

Her mouth was hermetically sealed by the lips of her lover.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WEDDING.

THE marriage took place in St. George's Chapel, Hanover-Square, and Augusta Merlmore became the happy bride of Mesmer de Biron.

The Count looked magnificently handsome ; his clear, pale, spiritual complexion, large, brilliant eyes, and long, dark hair and moustache, joined to his lofty stature and aris-

tocratic, almost fierce bearing, were voted by the ladies present *nem. con.* without a dissentient voice, the perfection of manly beauty, whilst the delicacy, softness, and expression of Augusta's features, her silken ringlets, her cream-coloured skin, and enamel-like neck and shoulders, the perfect contour of her form, and the exquisite minuteness of her feet and hands rendered him at the same moment the envy of every man beholding her, whose blood was yet unchilled by the icy influence of satiety, age, or the withering cares of the world.

Happy girl to marry such a man!—happy man to obtain a wife so lovely! Young, handsome, rich, and fashionable, what more can they desire! Such were the reflections of more than one spectator of the interesting sacrament—pshaw! ceremony I mean. For God's sake, reader, do not take us for Puseyites and Jesuits in disguise.

Prince Aurelius de Rosenberg had been in-

vited to the wedding ; at first he felt disposed to decline, but his pride came to his aid. " She shall not imagine that I am grieved," thought he, so he went. He looked pale and sad, notwithstanding his efforts to appear the reverse. Never had Augusta seemed so beautiful as at the moment she became the bride of another—a forbidden fruit to his longing soul. Perhaps that was one reason why he felt that he would have given the universe to have plucked it.

" The deed is done, then," said Aurelius as they left the chapel.

" Done ! why my dear Prince !" exclaimed Colonel Rossmill, " you speak of it as if getting married, were the most melancholy thing in existence."

" That depends upon—"

" Cerebral development of—?"

" Upon circumstances too numerous to enumerate."

" Ah !" said the Colonel, I never could get

the Count to let me feel his head ; but with such a wife as Augusta !—”

“ He must be happy--*must* be, or he deserves to be hanged, drawn, and—” the Prince stopped ; he recollected that he was a philosopher.

Biron and Augusta were on their road to Wilsdown Castle, in their new travelling carriage, with patent everythings, and Sago and a lady’s maid in the rumble. For some time they were silent ; at length Mesmer said, taking the hand of his bride in his own—

“ I wonder, Augusta, what people generally say under similar circumstances ?”

“ I am sure I have no idea.”

“ It is a very odd thing to find oneself united for all eternity, and shut up together *tête-à-tête*, in a green travelling carriage !”

“ Very !— pray, don’t kiss me, Mesmer ; consider, people can see us, pray—”

“ My angel love, that is easily remedied by drawing down the red blinds.”

“ But dear Mesmer, I think---”

“ What, dearest ?”

“ I am afraid that it is not---that is---not exactly.”

“ Well, my love ?”

“ Not exactly proper.”

“ Sweetest girl !” rejoined Biron with a smile, eagerly imbibing with his eyes, the beaming love that streamed from her beautiful orbs, and regarding with transport, the blush that mantled on her virgin cheek, “ I love you more than words can tell---where else could I have found such innocence, such beauty, and such intellect combined ! and you, Augusta, tell me do you really, truly love me as I do you ?”

“ I love you with my whole soul,” and the beautiful bride half buried her face upon the shoulder of her husband.

Wilsdown Castle was a fine old place---a place that seemed made for a grand seignior---

nothing *pavenu-ish* about it. No stucco---no whitewash---no green-painted railings. Norman gothic, of massive and extended dimensions, its grey stone solid walls, rose with picturesque *hauteur* from the side of a rugged hill. It was just the thing Mesmer wanted, and he bought the whole estate a bargain for less than forty thousand pounds. It produced a clear eighteen hundred a-year.

Advantage had been taken of the locality to lay out the side of the hill in the most fantastic gardens, full of grottos and archways, and picturesque effects ; fountains, too, there were, and sea-nymphs, and a stuffed lion in a cave, munching a human skeleton with other effects, the production whereof had helped to ruin the late owner of the Castle.

“ Oh, how delightful !” exclaimed Augusta as they strolled through the grounds together, the morning after their arrival.

“ I am glad you like the place.”

“ Nothing could be more charming ; I should like to live here for ever.”

“ So should I, dearest,” said Mesmer gaily, “ with you and love ; but you see that skeleton—here ! *memento mori*—but that is a disagreeable subject ; what think you of the Castle itself ?”

“ It reminds me of the days of chivalry, and you look like some knightly baron of the days of King Arthur.”

“ Indeed, I thought I bore my years pretty well,” said the young Count laughing, “ but I must consider myself a *verde antico* from this time forwards. It is a venerable pile, eh ?”

“ Very venerable,” said Augusta looking playfully in his face, which wore an expression indescribably comical.

“ Endeared to me by reminiscence, too,” said Biron in a tone of solemnity.

“ By reminiscences ?”

“ Yes ; this place originally belonged to my—the family from which my mother was descended.”

“ Indeed, that is delightful.”

“ Yes, it is lucky,” said Mesmer with that peculiar smile of satisfaction he ever felt in the concoction of a lie, it makes one seem less mushroomified in a neighbourhood. “ I hope you will not forget to tell every body of this little fact, my love.”

“ Most assuredly I will not, if you desire it,” said Augusta.

“ I command it by virtue of my right as your lord and master,” said Mesmer with mock heroic dignity.

“ May your shadow never be less, most mighty Caliph !”

“ In another hour I shall have no shadow at all, if the sun-dial is to be credited.”

“ Ah ! that is the reason I so love the

Arabic and Turkish phraseology ; they do outrage probability so delightfully."

" To show their independence of spirit, I suppose, before being bastinadoed !"

" After all, England is the only land of liberty—*dear* England !"

" You may well say *dear* England ! and you are right in calling it the land of freedom—for the rich and powerful—to which class we happily pertain ; but believe me, my love, for the poor, wretched, obscure, unfashionable devils, there is not a more hard taxed, hard worked, despotically governed land on the face of the globe. However, we will not talk politics the day after our wedding, and it is useless to give ourselves the trouble of sympathising with evils we cannot remedy."

Augusta felt sure that Biron was jesting when he made this hard hearted remark. He was not.

“ Take care you do not slip, Augusta ; the path is rather steep.”

“ Oh I am a perfect chamois.”

Diana herself could not look more bewitching !

Enough of this small talk.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CHANGE.

BEFORE Biron had been married six weeks there was a vacancy in the representation of the neighbouring borough.

Our adventurer immediately resolved to become a candidate for the seat. Such, however mis-directed, was the energy of Biron's character, that as long as the objects he had proposed to himself as the end and aim of his

ambition were unattained, he was totally incapable of enjoying, for any length of time, that voluptuous state of tranquillity in which more than a month had now passed away. He did not feel positively *ennuyé*, much less unhappy ; but his ever restless spirit longed to emerge from inglorious inactivity to invent, to lie, to deceive, to plot, to conquer, and to triumph. To get into parliament was at present his greatest desire, and an election held out the greatest hopes of excitement.

He imparted his design to his wife.

Augusta was all enthusiasm.

“ I shall write to your father and the Colonel and Friskerton, and beg them to come and stay with us if possible ; one wants friends about one at such a time.”

“ And suppose, dearest, we were to ask the Scales. You know Cecilia has just inherited some property in the county, although the house is let for some time to come.”

“ By all means, write to Cecilia yourself.”

“ And what do you think of Mrs. Bernard Tullamore ?”

“ True, she will do for Friskerton to flirt with ; I must now write to my solicitor to send me down a sharp electioneering attorney ; I will gain the day if I spend ten thousand pounds !”

The interior decorations of the castle were in excellent order, having been renewed throughout by the former proprietor ; the rooms were of magnificent size and splendidly furnished. Biron's establishment was small, but well arranged. Sago was in himself a host, and to him the Count first confided his intention of having visiters at Wilsdown, and putting himself up in nomination for the borough.

“ The Count,” said Sago to the housekeeper, a pretty widow of some eight or nine and twenty, “ contemplates the reception of divers and various guests of high degree ; he likewise purposes to get into the British senate, if the

electors will have him, which, of course, they will; for he is a fine, noble-hearted individual, though he certainly *did* drive over the old crossing-sweeper!"

"And pray, Mister Sago, what is the upshot of all this speechifying?"

"As the delegate of my lord, I am instructed to communicate to you his desire that chambers be prepared for—"

"Yes, I understand, for the people that are coming; I wish, Mister Sago, you would speak out like a man, and not beat about the bush so when you have anything to tell me."

"Fair lady of the keys and cupboard be not a-wrath with your devoted slave—"

"If you do that again!" said the pretty housekeeper, "I'll—"

What Sago did, or what the housekeeper intended to do, is of little import to our story.

In due time the guests arrived, and Castle Wilsdown became all gaiety and movement.

Dinner parties were given to the neighbouring gentry, and dances to their daughters, and Count Mesmer de Biron began to make himself as popular as he had projected, in the county where of old his maternal ancestors had held so distinguished a position as everybody knew, from the very best authority.

CHAPTER XXII.

PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLE.

Biron proclaimed to all his tenants, and as his farms were small, their number was considerable, that they might vote as they pleased!

But none of them had leases, so it did not much matter to them.

Mesmer's opponent was the honorable Mr. Wigman, he was the second son of Lord

Draggletaile, the largest landed proprietor in the county. He had expected to carry the day with little trouble or expense, and was excessively annoyed when he found that there was to be a contest. He was a very young man, younger even than Biron, and had made himself very obnoxious to all classes, by the excessive arrogance of his manners. To appear amiable was utterly out of his power; Biron, on the other hand, left a favourable impression everywhere he went. With the middling and lower classes especially he understood how to ingratiate himself, and what pledges to make in order to gain the hearts of the shopkeeper, and the mechanic. His external appearance too did much towards ensuring him the support of the female moiety of the village, his graceful and polite manner more. His former life had shown him, in vulgar phrase, where the shoe pinched, at any rate where it was imagined to do so. His canvass was, on the whole, successful, aided as he was by all his friends, in the

most effective manner. But one third of the borough was the property of Lord Draggletaile, and the other two thirds were venal to a degree. So that, notwithstanding, the personal prestige in his favour, our hero's antagonist, plain, stupid, unprepossessing as he was, with a purse of equal length and agents equally adroit, had at least an equal chance of success.

"By the bye," said Harry Scales, as they drove the day, before the poll, to the village in Biron's chariot, "excuse my ignorance, but what *are* your political principles?"

"Principally the desire to become an M. P."

"But joking aside—because if we should materially differ, I cannot conscientiously—"

"Well then, my principles are liberal? so decidedly liberal, that I am for tolerating all parties."

"Really," said Scales, somewhat confounded at this latitude of liberality, "you should be cautious how you pledge yourself to such very opposite opinions."

“Why so? I can but *vote* for one at a time’

“No, but you ought in my humble estimation to represent the views of your constituents.”

“How is that possible, seeing that in a general way they have none at all, or views so confused, unenlightened, and contradictory that it would be absurd to think twice of them. The only real principle of a poor elector is that he wishes to be better off than he is; now while property is so unequally divided, and in the hands of so few, which the country is so burthened with taxation necessary to pay the interest of that political incubus, the national debt, and whilst individuals are so infernally selfish you perceive there is not much hope for him.—When I get into the House I intend to vote for whatever appears to me beneficial to the country, and more especially the class I belong to—at present the thing is to get the opportunity of voting.”

“This does not sound much like patriotism,” said the artist.

“Patriotism,” said Biron, “is a narrow minded prejudice, if men were always what they ought to be, they were all philanthropic cosmopolites and Benthamites. I do not profess to be better than the rest, except in this one respect: I am no hypocrite, I do not attempt to conceal the real hollowness of my principles, beneath grand words and high-sounding phrases. Nor on the other hand would I have you imagine me worse than the mass, because I am frank and candid in my conversation. Believe me I sincerely desire the real welfare of mankind, though *entre nous*, I do not at this moment see very clearly how it is to be effected, and of course it is impossible to lay aside that primary feeling of self-interest which is implanted in the very springs of our nature. I want to get into parliament, that is my first object; I wish to do good, that is my second; I desire to think and judge as I please, that is the third.

To obtain these ends I am compelled to use the same means as the rest of the world, and after all, I think you will allow that the borough could be better represented by me than not at all?"

"No doubt my dear count---but do not misapprehend me, I merely wish to know ——"

"I understand---quite right---of course I should be very sorry that you should assist in upholding principles you disapprove of, but as I said, the borough could be better represented by me than not at all---for everybody knows that the Honorable Mr. Wigman stutters, and is a terrible blockhead---most likely he would pair off for the session."

"I think that 'pairing off,' is a disgraceful custom. A man ought to be compelled to resign his seat who wishes to evade his duties."

"Very true, *I* shall be found at my post, 'watching and praying'. Ah! here comes our foe in his carriage—and damnation! There is that scoundrel Monville by his side."

The rival candidates bowed politely as they

passed, and the contrast in their exterior was indeed Hyperion-to-a-Satyrish. The Honorable Wigman was dwarfish in stature, with a freckled face, *retroussé* nose, and hair like stubble. His eyes were small, and his eye glass painfully sustained by the contraction of the dexter optical muscles. Altogether he looked very much like a zoological baboon or Tittlebat Titmouse* *redivivus*. Monville bowed stiffly and indulged in a smile of diabolical malevolence, which Mesmer replied to with a glance *de haut en bas* of unutterable contempt.

“ Who is Monville ?” said Scales.

“ A rascal of a lawyer, whom I could expose and disgrace to-morrow, but that I understand he has a wife and child ; his hate towards me is proportionate to my forbearance.”

“ That is generally the case.”

“ I suppose this Monville is Wigman’s electioneering agent, thought Biron—then the day is mine !”

* See Mr. Warren’s ten thousand a year.

“The Countess and Cecilia have done you good service, I imagine,” said Scales.

“Excellent! I only hope their promises have not amounted to downright bribery—I warned them not to *give* anything as it would be buying votes *against* me, and perhaps worse. By the way I must tell Sago not to forget about those eggs to pelt the Wigmans with to-morrow.”

“But is it quite, I will not say gentlemanly, but ——”

“Pooh! all is fair in love and elections! you will never get into parliament, you are so absurdly fastidious!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

EGOTISM DEFEATED.

MIDNIGHT is past, we burn the nightly oil—Palmer's patent candle lamp we mean—midnight is past, we throw up the window-sash and inhale the cool freshness of the air. The trees in the park wave darkly to and fro ; we could fancy ourselves far away in the forests of Germany, amid the romantic scenes of our student rambles—were it not for the gas lamps that shine so villanously brightly !

And hark ! — a strange sound breaks the silence of the night—it is the lion, roaring in his den, in the zoological gardens—distinctively we can hear him—how he must long for freedom and the desert!—Again he roars—suppose he should break loose—what consternation, what dismay!—Rat, tat, tat, tat! that infernal knocker next door—It is no use to attempt poetry in London—down with the window-sash — another roar, by Jove !

We have drawn our writing table up to a sofa. Thou needst not grin at us, thou bald, skull-like phrenological head. Nor you, ye plaster poets, on your brackets.

We are—*tonnerre de dieu* ! the lamp is just going out, or this chapter might have run through half a-dozen more pages. 'Tis such a seductive subject; but darkness threatens, and we illuminate our chamber candle.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MONVILLE.

MONVILLE, the attorney, who attributed to Biron's influence the loss of his two best clients, to wit Colonel Rossmill and Merlmore, though as yet ignorant of his interview with Cashall, who had been attacked by a severe illness shortly after the count's visit, had conceived the bitterest hatred of our adventurer. In becoming the agent of the honourable Wigman, he was but too happy to get an

opportunity of doing Biron every injury that lay in his power. That there was something peculiar, nay, suspicious, about the conduct of the new lord of Wilsdown he had sufficient acuteness to perceive. But in what that something consisted was to him a mystery.

If it *were* really the Count de Biron, whom he had encountered in the *maison de jeu* at Paris, it was certainly a very strange circumstance. Why should he have gone there disguised? Was he an unfair player — a swindler in fine? But no, there was no possibility of cheating the bank — he staked his money fairly and he won — certainly his luck was most extraordinary — yet the same things have happened, and still frequently happen to many others. And again, who was his companion, that mysterious individual with the green eye-shade, who seemed so calm yet so absorbed, who played with such unhesitating confidence, and fell down in a fit when all was over?

The more the lawyer thought of the matter the more he was puzzled. Unimaginative and sensual the idea of anything beyond the common routine of experience, was to him at once inconceivable and ridiculous. He not only would have laughed outright at the bare mention of supernaturalism but, ignorant, like the greater mass of the children of this world, of the profoundest secrets and most wondrous truths of science, would have sneered contemptuously, had anybody but suggested the possibility of intuitive prevision or magnetic *clair-voyance*, effecting that which, in the ordinary state of the human organism, is generally believed to be impossible. He was a man who believed neither in sympathy or presentiments! sharp, calculating, and worldly, he scoffed at the illusions of poetry and fancy, and—it was fortunate for Biron that Monville was of a temperament such as we have described.

This man had never enjoyed any of the

advantages which wealth confers upon the youth and early struggles of its possessor. His father had been in very straightened circumstances, and the young lawyer had had to fight his way through a host of difficulties. Devoid of principle, his fear of the world's opinion, the value of which he estimated rather professionally, than as a man, with a morally responsible soul, was his only guide to virtue; temptation was thrown in his way, debts pressed heavily upon him, he thought he could sin in safety, and he yielded, he became like hundreds before and after him—a rogue. He prospered, and just began to see the road to fortune opening before him, when the entity of Mesmer, like a dark cloud, overshadowed his destiny. He lost his clients, everything went wrong, even Cashall—Cashall, whom he regarded as at all times an infallible resource, had turned restive and unmanageable, had replied to his threats by menaces equally dangerous, and asserted with unexpected boldness, the brother-

hood of crime, and the equality of infamy. What was Monville's indignation upon learning—but we will not anticipate.

In the room of 'The Green Kangaroo,' the inn in the village, affected by the partizans of the Honourable Wigman, sat lawyer Monville busy with a heap of letters and papers. A waiter entered and placed a note in his hands, a note in an hermetically sealed envelop.

"Who brought this note?"

"A little boy, sir——"

"Where is he?"

"Gone! he said there was no answer, sir."

"Oh! very well," said Monville, "it is of no importance;" and he stuffed the note into his pocket——

The contents of the note were as follows:—

"Meet me in an hour, at the second milestone from the village on the road to

London; I have matters of importance to communicate.

“ B.”

“ It must be from the count,” muttered the lawyer, “ what can he want with me?”---but it is useless to guess where all is mystery; I will go at all hazards---perhaps some light may be thrown on the Parisian adventure. I wonder --- supposing it to have been the Count de Biron---whether he saw *me* as plainly as I imagine myself to have seen *him* !”

It was almost dark as the attorney set out for the place of meeting. He found the Count standing by the side of a superb black horse, of immense size and apparent strength, well consorted with the tall and powerful form of its rider, who was dressed in the same sombre and monotonous livery.

All was silent around, no breath of air disturbed the leaves of the trees, now yellow with the fading hues of Autumn. Dark and

motionless stood the shapes of the charger and his lord like two bronze statues of symmetrical and gigantic proportions.

“ Good evening, sir,” said the attorney
“ I received a note signed B, and——”

“ It was from me,” said Biron, abruptly
“ I have but a few minutes to spare, they are expecting me at the castle. I will therefore at once explain my object in requesting the interview. You are employed by Mr. Wigman, my opponent?”

“ I am,” said Monville.

“ You have it in your power to assist my interest materially, nay, to turn the scale in my favour if you wished to do so?”

“ Possibly I have,” said the attorney, coldly.

“ You must do so,” continued Biron.

“ *Must?*” exclaimed Monville.

“ Yes, *must,*” replied the imperturbable Mesmer. “ I will give you my reasons — Firstly, in the event of your rendering me the aid I require, and my being returned

to parliament, I shall send you a cheque for two hundred pounds.

“Sir!” said Monville, “do you mean—”

“I mean what I say—let us have no acting—*I* know both you and your principles, and there is nobody else at hand to be humbugged I repeat—you shall have two hundred pounds in the event of my carrying the election, and your affording me every assistance in your power, without compromising yourself with the other party.”

“Two hundred pounds, in my humble opinion,” said the lawyer striving not to feel himself overawed by the cool tone of superiority and conscious power assumed by Biron, and speaking with deliberate sarcasm, “two hundred pounds is not much from so eminently fortunate a personage as the Count de Biron.”

The emphasis laid upon the word, fortunate, was slight, but marked, nor did it by any means escape the observation of our hero.

“ I cannot complain of my lot,” said Mesmer, “ I have rank, wealth, and most things that are supposed to render life agreeable, but why, Mr. Monville, you are pleased to particularise me so emphatically as *fortunate*, I am at a loss to conjecture ?”

“ Then !” replied Monville, “ if you are not to be termed fortunate, I do not know who is !”

“ But what do you call fortunate ?”

“ Men who are born eldest sons, heirs to estates, and whose fathers or uncles die the day before they attain their majority, men who marry a beauty and an heiress combined, without a settlement, men who get government offices worth above a thousand a year, with contingent pensions. Eminent lawyers, doctors, merchants. Parsons with more than one living, popular authors and artists whose society is courted and works in eager requisition ; briefly, all men who are successful and wealthy, and I should not forget to include—

gamblers—fortunate *gamblers who break banks at Parisian hells*, and win as much in an hour as honest industry rarely gains in a life time. These are the men I call fortunate.”

“Not a bad definition ; you are a man of the world, Mr. Monville ; but this is the time for business, not for abstract speculation ; I do not understand the emphasis you lay upon the words *gamblers who break banks at Parisian hells*, perhaps you will explain.”

“You were, I believe, about a month ago at Paris ?” began Monville.

“Then you were quite misinformed,” replied Biron coolly, “I have not been out of England since I was born.”

“Then I was mistaken,” replied Monville carelessly, “though the likeness was certainly very striking.”

“The case is not uncommon,” said Biron, “but where was it that you saw this striking likeness ?”

Now Monville, above all things, wished to

observe the expression of the countenance of Count de Biron, upon his alluding to the scene at the gambling-house. Unfortunately for his projected physiognomical observations, the night was growing very dark, although, had the sun been shining as at noon, he would scarcely have detected any change in the features of his companion beyond natural surprise at his assertions. But in the last question of the Count's he imagined that he perceived a latent interest which could scarcely be accounted for otherwise than by the confirmation of his suspicions. For Mesmer de Biron was not a man to give way to mere idle curiosity, besides he was evidently anxious to close his bargain with the agent, and moreover in a hurry to return to Wilsdown, according to his own statement. Accordingly Monville cunningly concluded that if he would be M.P. endured patiently a lengthy and minute recital of the gambling-house incident, and appeared to take an interest in the story, then, in all

probability was he (Biron) the hero of the tale as conjectured. If, on the other hand, he interrupted the narrative impatiently then was the probability in favour of Monville having been deluded by a mere likeness, which, as the Count observed, was not an uncommon case.

In tracing upon paper the winding mazes of human thought and reasoning, the historian is at times compelled to abridge, within a space that may be perused in less than a minute, that which in reality occupied hours, days, months, or even years, whilst, *au contraire*, as in the present case, he is often obliged to extend over pages, the reflections which dart like meteors through the brain, and possibly absorb an almost inappreciable period. The whole train of ideas detailed above flashed with the rapidity of light across the mind of the attorney.

Upon that hint he spake—

“ A short time ago business called me to

Paris, and chance, one evening, conducted me *pour passer le temps*, to a gambling-house in the *Palais Royal*—” here Monville proceeded to give an elaborate account of the appearance of the two gamblers, their success, and all the details with which the reader is already acquainted. He strove to be as prosy as possible, frequently repeating the same sentence, and dwelling upon trivial particulars, but the patience of his auditor seemed inexhaustible, and certainly if there was any logic in Monville’s reasoning, he might have safely said unto Biron “thou art the man!”

On the other hand, Mesmer at once saw that it would be expedient to let the lawyer say his say, in order to ascertain how far his knowledge extended, and to conclude as to what measures it would be best to adopt towards him.

“This is a very odd story, Mr. Monville,” said Biron with a good natured laugh that shook the attorney’s convictions to their foun-

dation ; “ but excuse my saying that it is much longer than amusing ; the only point in it appears to be the likeness of this lucky gamester to myself ; I wish it existed in reality instead of in your imagination, and if I understand you rightly, you seem more than half to suspect the identity ?”

“ Well, I must say that when a curl of dark brown hair escaped from under the wig, and he had taken off his spectacles, I could have sworn that it was yourself in masquerade. Not many men, Count de Biron, have eyes like yours.”

“ You are complimentary,” said Biron sarcastically, and two flashes of light seemed to issue from the darkness of his countenance.

“ The moustache, too,” persevered Monville, “ although grey (a little chalk would easily effect that) was precisely of the same shape.”

“ Indeed ?”

“ And the height—”

“ I presume you carry a foot rule in your pocket.”

“ Six feet is easily recognised.”

“ By the bye who was my friend, ‘ my fat friend ?’ inquired Mesmer sarcastically.

“ He was not fat, he was thin,” said the attorney, still wavering in his belief.

“ Oh, I thought you said fat ; well, then, my *thin* friend, who was he ? perhaps Lord Friskerton, or the Duke of Gamblesbury (no, I forget, he was already off to the East) since you seem to think it so probable, that men of rank, fortune, and position, should perpetrate such mummeries. Which of our youthful aristocracy was it ? Not, I suppose, Prince Albert, or even my friend the Prince de Rosenberg ?”

“ I do not know who he was,” said Monville somewhat abashed at the satirical tone adopted by Biron, but if ever I meet him again, I shall instantly recognise his features.”

“ *If* ever !” thought Mesmer, and he smiled sardonically.

“ Now,” said our hero aloud, “ if you please, Mr. Monville, we will return to matters of fact, and drop all allusion to mysterious gamesters in disguise, and such irrelevancies. I have made you a fair offer—”

“ Of the *fairness*, perhaps, the less that is said the better, but you seem to presume that I am to be bought like a horse or an ox, that I have no conscience—”

“ I have none myself, for I am convinced that it is a useless incumbrance ; as for your being bought, I presume, of course, that the best bidder may have you, were it Beelzebub himself.”

“ One would think I were conversing with a near relative, if not the master of that illustrious personage.”

“ No compliments sir, lawyer ; as I said before, you are to be bought by the best bidder. What does it benefit you whether the Honourable This, or Count That gets the seat, provided you obtain a well filled purse. Self-preservation is the first law of nature.”

“ But it is not here a question of self-preservation, but merely of self-benefit.”

“ You are mistaken again ; to prove, it hear my *second reason* why you should assist me as I wish.”

“ I am all ear.”

“ Then know,” said Biron, speaking in a still deeper and more suppressed tone than he had hitherto used, “ know that I am acquainted with every particular of the fraud—start not—I say the *fraud* practised upon the miserable Guy Merlmore ; the deed of partnership substituted for the mortgage ; all is known to me.”

“ The Devil !” exclaimed Monville taken by surprise at this sudden revelation, and completely thrown off his guard.

“ Yes !” continued Biron “ both Cashall and yourself are in my power ; but mark me, I alone possess the secret, the clue to the means of proving it, and whilst you are wise—you are safe—”

“ Surely,” thought Monville, this is some fiend from the abyss sent upon earth to be my tormentor ! everything seems known to him ; secrets he arrives at in ways the most unaccountable, yet most natural ; would that a whirlwind would sweep him from the earth ! or—”

It is a curious fact, that, notwithstanding their different dispositions and opposing organizations, similar circumstances produced both in the minds of Cashall and Monville the selfsame idea—the idea of freeing themselves from the bondage of a demon in human form, by the commission of one of the most terrible misdeeds of which humanity is capable. Thus was Biron not only criminal in his own person, but the cause of crime in others, to parody the saying of Falstaff, if we may venture to do so, with reference to so horrible a subject. But the attorney, though possessing infinitely less physical energy than Cashall, had a far greater share of moral daring ; he could not,

like the latter, in his calmer state, recoil with horror from the base notion of becoming a murderer—of dipping his hands in the blood of a fellow-creature. On the other hand, his clearer judgment at once took into consideration the probable consequences of crime and the half formed design was in little danger of realization.

Moreover, though no pigmy, he was far from equal to Biron in personal strength, and excepting a large clasp knife, unprovided with any weapon of offence.

“It is in vain to struggle with one’s destiny,” said he at length, “the absurd story you have taken up is false ; but of what use is my bare assertion to that effect—enough, I accept your offer, let me have the two hundred pounds the day after the poll, and I pledge myself that you are the successful candidate.”

“Good,” said Biron, “you may rely upon me, and listen !—if you should take it into

your head to spread, even by communication, to a single person, the ridiculous story of my likeness to this gamester you spoke of, as, although false, it might obtain credence from its very improbability, and injure my reputation, I shall be seriously offended. That it is false a little reflection must convince you, for were I desirous of gambling, what necessity for disguise? Am I not a free agent? master of my own actions? But, mark me, if this imaginary likeness should seem to you more convincing than my word and all rational reflection, keep it within your own breast or a tale may go forth built on somewhat less airy foundation relative to a certain Monville, gent. one, &c., which may lead to his being provided with a free passage to an unmentionable colony. Enough, be discreet and true, and you will find that you serve no ungrateful master!"

So saying, Mesmer vaulted upon the back

of his sable courser, and dashed away in the direction of the Castle.

Long after the form of the lord of Wilsdown and his horse had disappeared in the darkness, Monville, the attorney, stood rooted to the ground in the same attitude and position he had occupied during the dialogue we have recorded.

“ I have sold myself to Satan—body and soul !” murmured he gloomily as he turned in the direction of the village.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RESULT OF THE ELECTION.

ELECTIONS have ever afforded a fertile field to the imaginations, or perhaps it would have been more correct to say memories of that branch of historians at present so popular with the reading world and who, as the Count, whose adventures we recount, so truly observes, have been most unaccountably denominated novelists.

Novelists!— and do these ‘self styled, writers of new things,’ tell us of travels in far distant lands, of strange adventures in unheard of localities, of wondrous customs and mysterious rites to gods that dwell not in the pages of the Pantheon. No! the *novelists* leave lying, which should be considered their especial vocation, to the legitimate travellers, and as for a bold dash into the regions of fantasy or even antiquity (they rarely get beyond or rather behind the middle ages) it is not to be thought of— Mind, we speak of the novelists of the present age, of course there are exceptions to prove the rule, Marryatt and Bulwer to wit, but the majority seem positively to strive which shall excel his fellow in the description of all that is utterly common-place, fashionable, or vulgar.* Scenes

*It is a notable fact that almost all James’s heros are brought up with his heroines, and a tender *liason* formed as it were in the cradle ; this simplifies the invention of a plot, for it is only necessary to separate the little dears by some casualty, let the

in drawing rooms, boudoirs, parties at country houses, plots based on family pride or pecuniary inequality (how agonising it is to the feelings of a sensitive reader when Edward Fitz-something cannot marry Emma Something-dale, because her pa is a lord, and his (poor devil!) only a wealthy baronet, or because Edward has got ten thousand a year, and she only nine!) then for an incident—scarce things in your modern fashionable novels—a restive horse, a devoted cavalier catching it by the bridle---*voilà une situation interessante!* a little used up, it is true, but all the better on that account, assuming the principle to be true that it is most amusing to read of that with which we are most familiar. One very remarkable peculiarity

youth go through an adventure or two, and the lady endure a sufficient quantum of persecution, from her rich old rival, preparatory to uniting them for ever in the last chapter—and the thing is done.

in these modern offsprings of genius is that the hero, by courtesy, of the tale, is generally one of the least interesting characters in the book ; like the honorary secretary of a society, he has a real secretary to do all the heavy work, and this in novels chiefly, falls upon the shoulders of some mysterious rascal or super-ingenuous valet, who interferes with his master's affairs in a way, we, for our part, should kick him out of the house for. Well, having abused all our *confreres* in the most approved fashion, it now only remains for us to praise ourselves. In the first place we *do* flatter ourselves that some uncommonly odd events occur, here and there, in the course of our veritable history, (we do not pretend to be a novelist;) secondly, we venture to believe that our hero with all his vicious eccentricities is, *par excellence*, the hero of the book. Thirdly, we feel pretty certain that the inscrutability of our plot will baffle the conjectures of the most astute and experienced of novel readers. We may raise a ghost,

or murder our heroine in the very next page for ought he can foresee to the contrary.

Elections, as we were saying, have been a great deal be-written; we shall therefore be as brief as possible in our notice of the contest between Count de Biron and the Honourable Wigman. We shall not enter upon any narration of the secret wiles and open violence perpetrated by the partizans on both sides. We shall not write an '*Isis revelata*' of the ingenious modes by which bribery was proved to be not bribery, and corruption exercised under the disguise of every virtue, faith, hope, and charity inclusive. Or how dead men were polled, and live men prevented from voting. We shall not narrate how Mesmer de Biron mingled in disguise with the hostile committee, and how Monville contrived, whilst outwardly working miracles, by his activity and ingenuity, in favour of the Honourable Wigman, in darkness and stealth, still more miraculously to aid and abet to the utmost of his power the dreaded Biron.

How the Honourable Wigman made a speech, which, owing to his stuttering, nobody heard, and which owing to its utter absurdity, nobody could have understood if they had. How he was hissed and hooted, and how four trusty Bironites pelted him and his friends most severely with rotten eggs, a cart load whereof the noble Count had prophetically provided for the occasion. How the Count de Biron made a magnificent speech in a clear, loud, melodious voice, commencing with "Gentlemen, fellow-countrymen, and brother Englishmen!" and pledged himself to every conceivable measure, including protection to the landowners, free trade to the manufacturers, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, the prerogatives of the crown, the rights of the poor, and the wrongs of the rich; in short to anything and everything that occurred to his vivid imagination on the spur of the moment; how he was huzza'd! and long lived! and how thirteen barrel organs which had been hired by the Wigmanites to play

incessantly (all different tunes) in order to drown his voice by their discord, were knocked to pieces by the mob, and made into a bonfire. These and many other wonderful things we are contented merely to hint at, leaving the rest to the exuberant fancy of the generous and indulgent reader.

Suffice it to say, that he gained the day by an immense majority, was declared duly elected, chaired enthusiastically, and toasted with ninety times ninety, at a most splendid dinner in the evening. In rising to return thanks, it were needless to speak of his urbanity, wit, and eloquence, nor would we for the world suspect the noble Count of forgetting to allude to the prominent position formerly occupied by his maternal ancestors in the county. He felt, he said, as if he were returned to the home of his fathers, and the halls of his mothers, and his feelings were really almost two much for him—he was young and enthusiastic—he hoped soon to be prime minster—but whether he was or

not, that day would ever live in his remembrance as the brightest, the most ;—here his voice was completely drowned by the vociferous cheers of his auditors, and Mesmer perceiving this, and beginning to feel rather hoarse and exhausted, moved his lips energetically for a few moments longer, and fell back into his seat amid a hurricane of applause.

“And now for the peerage, my love!” said the new member as he got into bed, at an early hour the next morning, to his wife, “you see how eager I am to fulfil your wishes!”

“Dear Mesmer!” exclaimed Augusta, throwing her arms round his neck and kissing him.

O could man’s life be one long honey moon of eternal and unchanging sweetness!—Who knows but that in paradise—but indeed, as Socrates sagaciously observed—Who knows anything?

CHAPTER XXVI.

TOO LATE.

It was not until Augusta was lost to him for ever that Prince Aurelius de Rosenberg became aware how deep an interest she had excited in his heart. He passed the evening after the wedding in a state of feverish restlessness.

The idea of her absolute and unrestricted possession by another, was too horrible for

reflection. With all that outward calmness we are so apt to exert when the soul is torn by the wildest and most conflicting passions, he gave orders to a servant that he should not be disturbed, and locking himself up in his library, yielded himself without restriction, to the fury of his tempestuous emotions.

“To think” he muttered, as he strode fiercely from one end of the room to the other, “to think of Augusta, *my* Augusta, the only one of her sex who ever really approximated to the idol I worshipped, who might have been my own long since, but for the accursed vacillation of my inconsistent will—in the arms of a stranger, learning the first transports of love, idolized and idolizing, indifferent as to my sufferings, my fate, my very existence!

“Why did I not discover how deeply I loved her before it was too late! Oh that unfortunate coldness of demeanour on which I prided myself so vainly, and which, in all probability, she mistook for the pride of superior rank,

a delusion, I scorn and despise more deeply than words can tell—and she is really wedded—for ever united to this young butterfly count, this shallow, flirting coxcomb---but no, I will not be unjust, he is younger and handsomer than I, he has intellect, grace, a manly bearing, all this I acknowledge, yes I will give him his due, after all, he is but the innocent cause of my misery---and yet it is useless to disguise from myself the miserable conviction that to my own indecision, rather than to his successful rivalry, I owe the loss of every earthly happiness. I feel she would have loved me, that it needed but a little relaxation in my cold, unimpassioned manner to have induced a reciprocal feeling in her breast; but she looked upon me as a being without passion or sentiment, a morose philosopher, a thing to be *respected* Oh fool fool! what wretchedness hast thou prepared for thyself!

With a groan of agony, the Prince threw

himself upon a sofa, and burying his face in his hands gave vent to a bitter and irrepressible burst of tears. Oh, the torture of those tears shed by the strong man in his loneliness, the emblems of a grief which no sympathy may solace, no philosophy control, when the fear of death appears matter for ridicule, and the hope of heaven as a taunt!

Deadly pale, at length Aurelius raised his head, the change was fearful, he looked like some pallid spirit in an ancient legend, his hair fell wildly over his countenance, his lips were colourless, and his teeth closed convulsively. At this moment a phrenological cast upon the table before him, met his eye, it seemed to remind him of his former theories, as to human organization, to say to him "consider, your highness, it is only such and such organs a little out of sorts, you have nothing to do but to get them restored to their normal state, and you will feel as well as ever, man has no mind, he

is nothing but an extraordinary conglomeration of matter, a curious piece of natural mechanism."

Thus whispered some malignant demon from the plaster lips of the hideous head. Never had Aurelius felt so disgusted with the vanity of philosophy as at that moment. He struck the cast a blow that shivered it to atoms, and again buried his face in the pillow of the sofa, his soul seemed to shrink within itself, and the form of Augusta rose before his imagination so vividly that at length he almost fancied her really present, and gradually sunk into a kind of torpor, or trance, which lasted for several hours.

How beautiful she looked in the church! thought, he, and the whole scene rose before him, till he actually seemed to hear the voice of the clergyman, and the solemn tones of the organ. All that day and all the next he remained absorbed in grief, scarcely touching food. He had resumed his appearance of external calm,

but his utter indifference to everything that passed, spoke of a gloom of spirits not easily to be prescribed for. He never read, he seemed to have almost forgotten that such things as the sciences of Mesmerism and phrenology existed.

By one of those sudden revulsions of the mind, which occasionally startle us, he gave up the materialism he had before so strenuously advocated, and took refuge in the most exaggerated transcendentalism. Instead of Gall, Spurzheim, Spinoza, Combe, &c., he might now be seen poring over Hegel and Fichte, with other of his renowned countrymen. He plunged into the numerical mysteries of the Pythagoreans, and set enquiries on foot as to whether any authentic bust of Zeno was to be purchased.

“I am thirty years of age,” he would say to himself, “and my body has already become a prison to my soul. I live in a world whose pleasures afford me no joy, amongst people

with whom I cannot sympathise. But this cannot go on, I will leave this dull Europe, and travel through savage and unexplored regions—until death leads me to explore those realms which, from doubt of their existence, I hesitate voluntarily to enter. What profit, knowledge, and science, since our happiness must yet ever depend upon the feelings. I have wasted the ten best years of my life in fruitless studies, and now——”

The next morning Prince Aurelius de Rosenberg was whirling away from the English metropolis on his way to the highlands.

Nevertheless, when parliament had again met, and a new season re-commenced, he once more found himself in London, a frequenter of the soirees, and balls, and dinners of the great; himself giving soirees, and balls, and dinners—but then the Countess de Biron was the belle of the season, was everywhere, irradiating by her beauty and her wit, the dulness of fashionable vegetation, and even

to see her, to converse with her, to be received as her most intimate friend was some balm to the wounded and remorseful spirit of Aurelius.

CHAPTER XXVII.

POLITICAL.

ON returning to London to fulfil his senatorial duties, Biron at once distinguished himself by the splendour of his equipages, and the magnificence of his parties. His house, which was large and fashionably situated was now furnished with luxurious splendour. The number of his servants was increased

and their liveries of white and silver were the admiration of the town. At his soirees and conversazione the *entree* to which was eagerly sought for, beautiful young pages in the most tasteful costumes attended upon the guests, in place of stiff and powdered footmen ; chandeliers of rose-colored glass shed a softer radiance upon the features of the lovely dancers, and fountains of the choicest wines were ingeniously contrived to play in the centre of the refreshment tables. In short, every refinement of luxury was put in requisition by our Sybarite hero, whose wealth fame soon exaggerated to a tenfold degree, whilst the reports of his wife's dowry absolutely verged upon the miraculous.

Meanwhile, Augusta's beauty was the theme of every tongue, her *bon mots* were repeated by the whole universe---of dandies ; her eyes were soneteered by many a silken minstrel ; and her portrait, or rather an engraving,

humorously so called, appeared in annuals and books of beauty without number---that is to say, provided nobody took the trouble to count them.

‘As beautiful as the Countess de Biron’ became almost a proverb, and would have become so quite, but for the unaccountable jealousy of her rival goddesses.

“I am afraid, after all, my dear Lady C—— that you and I and Mrs. —— must go to Paris to get the question decided!” said the countess, gaily, as they were once looking over Heath’s together, in the boudoir of the latter.

“The *golden* apple is given to you by acclamation,” said Lady C ——

“No, no, I wave all pretensions to the throne of mammon.”

“We are not surprised at Venus Amathusia, as Schiller says, *waving* anything--- from the daughter of the sea it is but natural!”

“ It is plain that your father, the admiral, has been with you lately, since you go to sea for your *jeux d’ esprit*, my dear Mrs. — Now if I wanted a *jeu d’ esprit*, I should send for Mr. Dizzyreely, the romantic politician.”

“ A *jeu d’ esprit* indeed — but really you must not be so terribly satirical, what do you think of his ‘ Sybil ’ ?”

“ I think it very much like the Sybilline leaves in the Roman history, vastly mysterious in its import.”

“ Yet its motives appear praiseworthy, and I believe that his truth is to be depended on — perhaps it would be better if there were more like him.”

“ Yes, I believe he has excellent objects in view, but I am persuaded that his genius is rather of that order to stir up the fire and latent energy of other minds, than to become of immediate utility.”

“ I agree with you---there is little that is practical in the tendency either of his speeches or his

writings — The former are too personal, and the latter seem to want a distinct and self-conscious purpose. He points out evils without suggesting a remedy. Everybody knows that everything on earth *might* be improved, the question is, *how* is it to be effected?"

" Ah ! here is Lord Friskerton."

" What news, bold cavalier? you look —big with the fate of empires—"

" And of *Counts*," completed Friskerton. " Oh ! my dear countess, such a speech ! such brilliance, such argument, such eloquence !--- the opposition shivered in their seats---What was Burke, Canning and --- but comparisons are odoriferous as Mrs. Malaprop says. I knew it, I always said so --- the count will become one of the great guns of the ministerial party, B—— is a pop-gun to him. I never was so astounded in my life, you should have seen the face of the premier, he seemed doubtful which feeling to give way to, triumph

in the defeat of his enemies or jealousy of the rising giant—the count will carry all before him—there never was such a *debut* --- I shall live to see Biron first lord of the treasury or my name is not Friskerton! --- *vivat* Count de Biron!”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE COSTUME—THE PASSION.

SINCE his marriage with Cecilia Darcy, the reputation of Harry Scales as an artist had increased immensely. What effect, or why any effect at all should result from the fact of his wife having brought him fifteen hundred a-year, we are at a loss to determine, but so it was, the demand for his paintings became greater every day, and the sums

given for them exceeded the most sanguine anticipations of his youthful struggles. Many, however, of his best pictures he preferred keeping in his own gallery, and Cecilia, who idolized his glorious art, not a little aided him in these resolutions.

Of good family, and his wife being still more highly connected, not to mention her repute as a poetess, he now moved in the highest circles, lived and painted *con amore* in every sense of the word, and entirely eschewing portrait painting, that sand bank to the bark of artistic genius, indulged his exuberant and creative fancy in the most fantastic and exquisitely poetical productions.

One fine, clear, frosty morning in February, Lord Friskerton paid a visit to the artist.

"How do you do, my lord? splendid weather."

"Splendid! --- particularly for walking, if a man grows tired of the monotony of moving

on a pair of legs, and wishes to hop upon one for the sake of variety."

"I should say the *monotony* would be greater in the latter case, if my dim visions of bygone Greek adjectives do not deceive me."

"For heaven's sake, my dear fellow," cried Friskerton, laughing, "don't talk grammar; it is not expected from either lords or artists, they are privileged people in that respect."

"Well, I will not, as you dislike it --- but explain your riddle."

"Why, the boys in the streets have been so infernally industrious in making slides all over the pavements, that it is quite an art to prevent oneself from falling down and breaking an arm or a leg. It is a bad plan, walking in London—man is a coaching animal, or why should coaches exist---But I suppose you are going to Biron's fancy ball to-morrow?"

"Unless something extraordinary should occur to prevent me; it will, no doubt be

one of the most magnificent affairs of the season."

"By Jove! everything he does is magnificent, he is a princely fellow, this Count de Biron!"

"His taste is superb!"

"His generosity unexampled --- I admired a splendid horse of his the other day—it was sent to my stables the same evening; I told him I could not think of accepting it as a gift, but if he would part with it for any sum of money I should be delighted to buy it. 'Pshaw!' said the count. 'My dear Frisky, between men like us, the mere value of a horse is not worth mentioning, besides when I really like a thing I never estimate its worth by circulating minerals; I give you the horse because I wished to afford you pleasure, had an indifferent person offered ten thousand pounds for it I should not have accepted it!'"

"And what did you say?"

“ I accepted it of course, and told him to dispose in like manner of all my goods and chattels, game, cattle, in short everything that I had. To this he replied, that from a rich man such trifles involved no sacrifice, that he required something more of me, and what do you imagine that was ?”

“ I have not the slightest conception.”

“ Merely my influence in obtaining a peerage.”

“ Good heavens! what does Biron want with a peerage ?”

“ I am sure I cannot see, after having distinguished himself so brilliantly as he has done already in the House of Commons ; young as he is, there is nothing that he might not look forward to.”

“ Nothing! he would be premier, if he played his cards well, by the time he was thirty——”

“ There is not a doubt of his easily obtaining a coronet if he wishes it, they say that

the first lord is already as jealous, as a lovesick girl, of his talents. But I must not forget my chief object in calling upon you, I have been thinking and thinking about a costume for to-morrow evening; the more I think the more I am puzzled in my choice, and now, in the eleventh hour, I come to you for assistance."

"I shall be most happy to render you every service in my power, but what sort of a costume do you wish for—classical—grand—picturesque?"

"Oh! anything!—I had resolved to go in armour, if nothing else occurred to me, as Bayard the knight *sans peur et sans reproche*—By the way, what a charming creature that desperate mermaid of yours is!"

"Despairing sea-nymph you mean, my lord!"

"Well, despairing sea-nymph. I suppose you have given up all that sort of thing now?"

“ Entirely—by the way what do you think of Neptune as a character?”

“ The trident would be a bore, always in the way, poking in peoples’ eyes.”

“ Or Proteus, you might change your dress half-a-dozen times, casting your skin like a serpent.”

“ Too hot by half!”

“ Or Hercules?”

“ Oh, I hate everything that is mythological.”

“ Or Alcibiades, the rake of Athens?”

“ I detest anything that is classical.”

“ Well, suppose you go as a French doctor of the time of Louis XIV, with a pocket full of prescriptions, such as cures for prudery ---for waltz mania---for sentimentalism, and so on, I can assist you in writing them, and we will set about it forthwith?”

“ Excellent! that is just what I wanted, a *role*, that gives one always something to

say and do, besides it will be an excuse to feel the pulses of the girls !”

“ Certainly — you must have a wig and a long bamboo cane with a gold top, and a large snuff-box, and some boxes of sweetmeats and bons-bons by way of pills——”

“ Upon my soul, Scales, you are a trump ! and what are you to represent.”

“ Apemantus, the grumbler, from Shakespeare, and I flatter myself I shall play the morose philosopher to perfection.”

“ I suppose everybody will be there.”

“ Everybody !”

“ Biron’s fortune must be immense, or he could never carry on this sort of thing long !”

“ Do you not think that there is almost as much in the *way* gold is scattered as in the quantity ?”

“ No doubt---but there is no tinsel about the count’s substantial luxury.”

“ What a beautiful creature his wife is !”

“ Beautiful---angelic !---but not my style.”

“ Not substantially luxurious enough, eh, my lord ? not like Mrs. Bernard ?”

“ Pooh ! the Tullamore was all very well, a glorious creature in many respects, but that is all over now---you have not seen the Duchess of Villersden ?”

“ No, who is she ?”

“ Perfection.”

“ A common case, what more ?”

“ A widow.”

“ Not an anomaly.”

“ Oh ! you, unbelieving, Hebrew Jew, faithless Mosaic Arab!---but you will soon be converted when the sun of her radiant loveliness has once shone upon your dazzled eyes !”

“ Is Saul also amongst the prophets ! Lord Friskerton also turned rhapsodist ?”

“ I tell you she is matchless --- adorable ! without an equal in the world ! Her husband, you must know, was some thirty years older

than the duchess, when he married her, at the time a mere girl, they lived entirely in Italy. The duke died a year ago, and at the age of four and twenty, more beautiful than Helen, richer than Croesus, she has returned to her native land to enchant the soul of every one who beholds her !”

“ Lord Friskerton amongst the number.”

“ Well, I do not mind confessing to you ; you have just married, for love, a beauty and a poetess—if she turned out an heiress it was not your fault — you will sympathise with me—I am in love—really in love—and for the first time I feel my soul expanding with feelings utterly strange to me until now—Oh ! how happy should I be to sacrifice one half of my fortune, so that the duchess were a portionless girl to share the other with me !”

“ And why may she not share the whole and yet remain what she is ?”

“ Ah ! my friend, a real passion clears

away much of the illusive mists of vanity ;
I feel my own unworthiness, I dare not aspire
to such god-like happiness !”

And was this indeed the same Friskerton
whom we have hitherto known so full of
levity and shallowness ! --- Certes Love is
a wondrous and a potent necromancer !

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FANCY BALL.

THE evening arrived, the guests were assembled. Nothing could surpass the variety and magnificence of their costumes. Of all ages, of all nations were there; on every side gold and jewels reflected the blaze of light which the chandeliers emitted; on every side, the most grotesque contrasts were exhibited. In compliment to Biron, who by this time, ventured

to hint a near relationship to his father's family which was rendered the more interesting by the mystery in which he veiled his allusions, almost all the Byronic characters were present, and more than one Sardanapalus, Conrad, and even Manfred was to be seen. A solitary Arimanes, in a dress of black and scarlet, with a crown of jet and gold, stalked silently about, and a Childe Harold was seen surveying the lively scene with humourous, gravity, and muttering, "that there was a sound of revelry by night," with other apposite quotations, which kept the risible muscles of his friend Mazeppa in a state of almost unremitting excitement.

On the other hand, the lordly poet's female characters were much less affected by the company, probably on account of their very so-so reputations.

On an ottoman of crimson velvet, surrounded by admirers, sat the beautiful Duchess of Villersden, as "Queen Mab," in a dress of

light blue satin, and a white lace veil, fastened to her head by a circlet of magnificent diamonds.

To describe the perfect purity of her complexion, the voluptuous fascination of her large, melting, dark-blue eyes, the silken softness of the long, light-brown, hair, which fell in exuberant ringlets upon the milk-white neck and bosom, swelling with life and sensation, the exquisitely rounded form in whose slightest undulation a world of poetry and rapture appeared to lie, the rapid changes of expression in her delicate features, from ineffable scorn, to languishing sadness, or the most vivid delight; to describe all this, would require a poet, and the attempt would ill befit a cold historian like ourselves.

By the side of this dazzling apparition stood a superbly dressed Don Juan---a Juan of the original Spanish species---and certes neither his form or face would have disgraced that celebrated hero.

Long, dark hair streamed from beneath his



DON JUAN.

plumed sombrero on either side, of a pale oval countenance, with features small, and regular, eyes large, and as it were, swimming in liquid brilliance ; a fringe of dark brown whiskers surrounded his face, and a long moustache of like hue and texture overshadowed his upper lip ; his open shirt frill, of the finest lace, displayed a neck of alabaster whiteness---a purple velvet cloak depended from his left shoulder ; one hand rested upon the jewelled hilt of his rapier, the other on the back of the duchess's chair, over whom he bent in an attitude at once careless, and graceful, yet eminently calculated to display a form of almost faultless symmetry, which his close fitting costume of white and rosepink satin, set off to the utmost advantage.

“ I trust,” said the fairy Queen, with a smile of ineffable fascination, that you have reformed, you perfectly shocking *morale* Giovanni, by this time, or really I shall feel quite unsafe in your company.

Spirit of beauty ! the greatest conquerors have been themselves at length overcome, and loaded with fetters---luckily *my* chains are of roses !

The very light here is rose colored, most famous grandee !

“ You approve of the plan ?

“ Oh, decidedly ! it saves old dowagers like myself, the trouble of *rouging*---but really one might fancy oneself in the very heart of my fanciful kingdom ; in Fairy land itself, everything here is so beautiful ; those shaded lamps suspended above the pictures, have a perfectly magical effect ! No, you shall never again hear me boast of the wonders of the carnival.”

At this crisis, in the conversation of the fairy queen and the dissolute Spaniard, during which their eyes held still more elegant converse than their lips, an old fashioned looking individual with a basket in his hand, and an enormous wig

was seen approaching, followed by several other guests who listened, amid shouts of laughter, to the harangue which he delivered in a tone of ludicrous pomposity.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you see before you the most celebrated quack doctor in the world, who knows the cures of every disease under the sun, no matter whether constitutional, organic, mental, social, or political!

“Then tell me how to cure my headache,” said Lucy Danvers, a graceful girl of seventeen, in the guise of a flower seller.

“Let me feel your pulse.”

“Well?”

“You ought to go home and go to bed.”

“Nonsense, my lord doctor!” said his pretty patient, pouting, and hastily withdrawing her hand.

“Oh, very well, if you will not follow my prescription you know I cannot—stay! try

mesmerism---Captain Somerton is a most experienced practitioner."

"I shall be most happy to try my power," said the honorable Captain.

Miss Lucy approved of this prescription, so the Captain, who, was both young and good-looking, commenced operations, and the young lady went off into a pretended state of *clair voyance*, delighted to become a point of attention, and to reply, in the most absurd manner, to the still more absurd questions, proposed to her by the circle of gentlemen who had collected round her.

Meanwhile, Friskerton, for he it was, advanced towards the fair Duchess of Villersden.

"I come to cure your majesty's complaint?"

"Indeed! I was not aware that I had one--- pray what is the matter with me?"

"You are a widow!"

"And do you call that a disease?" said the duchess in surprise."

"Certainly! a most pernicious one."

Now the fairy queen having been married to a man so much older than herself, could not be expected to feel much regret at his decease; after the lapse of the orthodox twelve months, in fact she altogether coincided in opinion with the lordly doctor, she therefore inquired what remedy he should recommend for her fearful malady?

The doctor silently drew from his pocket an earl's coronet, which he offered, upon one knee, to the duchess.

A black frown rested for an instant upon the brow of the Spaniard, but vanished as quickly as it came, for Biron, whom the reader has doubtless already recognised in the handsome Don Juan, was not wont to reveal by outward signs, the evil thoughts that occupied his brain. Calmly, serene, he smiled with an expression---half scorn, half pity, upon his friend whose audacious meaning he instantly detected.

But the Duchess shook her head, mournfully,

and said "it cannot be, do not imagine that I despise your remedy, but I can never--- never apply it !

"There," said the young peer, concealing the bitterness of his chagrin by a poor attempt at a smile, "then I will give it to our friend the Spaniard, as a cure for ambition."

"I accept it," said the Count with a laugh, "ambition is a fatiguing master, and far too *exigeant* for a Juan to serve, so, many thanks for your medicine."

At this moment the eyes of Mesmer met those of an Armenian, who was passing, he glanced significantly at the bauble he held in his hand. The Armenian replied by an almost imperceptible nod, and disappeared in the crowd.

Who has not read the 'Ghost seer,' that matchless though fragmental production of Schiller's mighty genius? Who remembers not the mysterious Armenian masque, and his

portentous whisper, "at nine o'clock he died!" Well we remember our delighted feelings, as for the first time, in a verdant garden, on the banks of the 'beautiful Rhine,' with the Drachenfels before us, and the sun setting in hues of gold behind the seven purple mountains, we plunged amid the labyrinth of those wondrous adventures, and longed in the romance of our student imagination, to be ourselves an actor in like scenes. Years have passed away and we have witnessed—aye, and suffered things that in the gay innocence of our hearts we had then deemed scarcely less incredible than the appearance of a whole legion of spectres. How little did we then dream of the faithlessness of friends, the cold hearted and selfish cruelty of relations, the avarice, the meanness the insane prejudices of the profane, vulgar, as my dear Horace so aptly terms them!

How little did we dream of the cares, the

anxiety, the trouble, the *business* of life, with all its revolting details! For us life had but one object—to love! one care—to be beloved! one trouble—to enjoy!

In those days the buoyant spirit took no thought of to-morrow, of lawyers, of entails, of duns, doctors, or the devil! all was *couleur de rose*, and the petted, flattered stranger in his boyish pride, deemed that to be happy was his changeless destiny, and that every incident that threatened to interrupt the harmony of his existence, each one who dared

“To bring a slovenly, unhandsome, corpse
Between the wind and his nobility,”

was a sacrilegious opposer of the fiat of Providence!

Changed—changed—changed! the steed of passion and ambition was backed, the gulf bounded over, the veil rent from before the

shrine—the *tree of knowledge is not that of life!*

Drum hab' ich much der Magie ergeben.*

Yes, magic—for to dare to seek, beyond the commonplace routine which *practical* wise men lay down, the mighty powers, invisibly pervading the universe, the wondrous attributes of that spirit by which mortals are animated, and the mysteries of that eternity which immortal intelligences are destined to pervade, to direct the thoughts of others by a simple act of volition, to foresee the future by instinctive perception, to conquer pain, fatigue, and evil inclination, in ourselves or others, by the sole power of a determined soul, *this* is to be a magician in the real sense of the word, and all this is possible—aye more—it is *true!*

But to return to Schiller's Armenian, we

*Goethe's Faust first part.

were about to say, when our egotistical and vagrant imagination ran away with our intention, that not even in the pithy and mysterious sentence of the celebrated masque of Venice lay more recondite and important signification than in the nod of our passing Armenian in the ball room.

“Who is that Armenian?” inquired the Duchess.

“He?” replied Mesmer, “he is the *premier*.”

CHAPTER XXX.

STILL THE BALL.

THE musicians, in the attire of troubadours, who were seated in a tent of crimson satin, now struck up a gallopade, and twenty or thirty most heterogeneously assorted couples were simultaneously whirling round the saloon. The fairy queen gliding along in the arms of her gallant host, whilst poor Friskerton looked on with a somewhat dismal expression of countenance.

“What is the matter, Friskerton?” said the honorable Captain Somerton, who had become his prime bachelor friend and confidant, since Biron’s marriage, “what betokens this rueful aspect?”

“Rueful aspect!--- not at all rueful --- but I say Somerton, do you perceive how devilishly agreeable the count is making himself to his partner.”

“To be sure I do, there is nothing very irrational in that—she is the Villersden, is she not?”

“Yes,” replied Friskerton, with a groan.

“A lovely creature!” exclaimed his friend.

“It is too bad of him!” muttered the peer.

“What is too bad?”

“Biron’s neglect of his wife; during the last month he has become as cool and indifferent as if they had been married ten years.”

“How do you account for it?”

“ Why, *now* I account for it by the conviction that he is making love with all his heart and soul to the Duchess of Villersden. His conduct is most unprincipled !”

“ I agree with you — and how *did* you account for his estrangement from his wife, so young, so beautiful ?”

“ Why, I *did* think that he was getting a little jealous.” — (Biron jealous !)

“ Jealous of what ?”

“ Of the Prince de Rosenberg’s constant visits.”

“ The prince is very fascinating—for my part, I cannot see what the deuce the women see in him, but I have myself known five decided cases of the most desperately hopeless passions on his account.”

“ It is most strange ! yet Biron is certainly more handsome, besides he is much younger.”

“ I do not know that that is exactly an advantage, and as for mere beauty, you know what Wilkes used to say on the subject ?”

“What about the hour’s start? yes, and I have heard a vast number of very ill-looking fellows quote it with great unction.”

“What do you think of it?”

“That it is a piece of d——d humbug!”

“To return to our lambs, how do you explain the popularity of the prince with the sex?”

“Firstly, he is a prince, that goes a great way; Biron may live with twice the splendour, but Rosenberg has the solid standing of royal rank and royal birth—Next, the prince is a magnetiser, and that throws a sort of reverential mystery about him—Lastly, I imagine that there is more depth of feeling in his manner, and in reality, than in the Count.”

“I am sure you cannot accuse his present glances of wanting depth of feeling?”

“No, but to me, it appears to be feeling of the wrong kind?”

“That is merely because you——”

“Hush!” said Friskerton, in a suppressed

tone, no more of that, if you value my friendship!"

"I do not understand what you mean by feeling of the wrong kind?"

"Have you then no morals?"

"I have been a good deal at Paris lately."

"Well, putting aside the question of the morality or immorality of the thing——"

"Which from *you* certainly does sound rather too droll!"

"Putting all that aside, I say, I cannot help fancying that in the Prince de Rosenberg I recognize a real philanthropist, a man who views things and people with a philosophic and impartial eye, with a spring of good and noble feelings at the bottom of his heart, ready at every moment to burst forth were they not restrained by a certain indefinable *hauteur* and respect for *usage du monde*. On the other hand, the Count de Biron, with many, undoubtedly, excellent and generous qualities, seems always to take an ironically

selfish view of a subject, and scarcely to be capable of forming any other; at times, too, there is a sort of diabolical pleasure in his look, as if he regarded every one else merely as his slaves or the tools of his enjoyments, and an implied superiority in his tone which grates upon ones nerves. One moment you believe that he would go through fire and water to serve you, the next that his friendship is ingenious acting, and his objects utterly selfish. --- Altogether, he is a most incomprehensible being, and I should be sorry to swear that the whole opinion I have expressed of him is not entirely wrong, and that he is not the most frank, open-hearted fellow in existence!

“ You have taken to thinking lately, Friskerton, most surprisingly ; you will be quite a moral philosopher before long.”

“ I have much lost time to make up for,” replied the young peer gravely.

It was, indeed, surprising to see how a veritable passion had tended, suddenly, to develop

the latent powers of the young nobleman's mind. That which was before mere curiosity, now became a spirit of investigation, and Friskerton bid fair to become a man of by no means despicable intellect.

"Hem!" said a voice behind them, "it is very odd that people always stand in one's sunshine—lamplight, I mean—I wish you would get out of the way, sir—make way for a better man!"

"And pray who are you?" said Somerton tartly, as he found himself rudely pushed aside by a man in a Greek costume.

"I?—I'm Apematus at your service—provided you will do my bidding."

"Ha, Scales!" said Friskerton, not heeding the disconcerted look of the honorable Captain, "you are the very person I wanted—do me a favour and deserve my eternal gratitude—here, take this sketch-book and pencil—I brought it with me in my pocket on pur-

pose—and draw me a likeness of the Duchess of Villersden.”

He lowered his voice at these last words ; the artist nodded, took the book, and waited for a favourable moment to commence operations.

“ Never mind how rough, how sketchy it may be,” said Friskerton, “ so that I can see the likeness.”

“ Be patient ; stand before me, so that I can lean the book upon your left shoulder, and see without being seen.”

In a few minutes the artist had completed his task, and produced one of those slight, pencil outlines which so frequently convey more actual similitude than the most elaborate painting.

The Peer squeezed his hand ecstatically, and murmured the most extravagant gratitude.

“ Good God !” thought Scales, “ we shall

have him making a fool of himself if he goes on in this way much longer ! I will go and see where my Sultana is. Ah ! what happiness has been mine since Cecilia became my bride ! I wonder if it is possible that I should ever change like de Biron."

Meanwhile the Countess, escaping from the importunities to dance, with which she was assailed by Persians, Turks, Spaniards, Corsairs, Manfreds, and even the darkrobed Arimanes, had taken refuge in an ante-room, and throwing herself upon a sofa, was for a moment alone—alone with her own sad thoughts.

Her snow white, simple, classic costume, (she had selected that of an Ionian,) became her admirably ; one little white hand sustained her throbbing forehead, whilst the other arm, in its smooth, ivory roundness, hung dejectedly by its side ; and how much expression of the most touching sorrow lay

in the mournful relaxation of that one fair, rounded arm !

Well has it been remarked by a painter, whose friendship we are proud to boast of, that there is not a limb, a joint, not even a hair of the body which, when under the pure influence of feeling, unconscious, indifferent, as to the effect upon others, is not instinct with the most comprehensive expression, and that in the gesture of a hand may often be read as much of the internal sensation as in the most skilfully varied changes of the features.

Truly nature has but one truth ! but many are the pages in which her secrets are to be read by the initiated.

The astrologist reads in the stars—the gipsy, from the palm—the phrenologist, from the cranium—the physiognomist from the features—all may arrive at the same fact by different roads, all may be equally correct.

Perhaps a union of all is yet to be effected.

A tall monk, of the Carmelite order, had approached Augusta, and unobserved taken a seat by her side. A large hood almost entirely covered his countenance.

“Why so sad, fair Ionian?” said the Carmelite in a low, gentle tone.

“Sad!—ah! Prince Aurelius, I am glad to see you here to-night; but why have you selected so sombre a costume?”

“It is an outward sign of the inward state,” replied the Prince calmly, but sorrowfully.

“You should not be so melancholy; I have observed of late that you have quite lost your spirits, and you look ill, too; it should not be so.”

“They say that example profits more than precept—you too are sad?”

“Indeed, indeed, I am very unhappy!” said the countess, abruptly, with difficulty refraining from tears.

“ Perhaps I can guess the cause—myself a sufferer from the self-same evil”.

“ But, Prince, you jest—*you* cannot love without return, you whom everybody admires, every woman adores?”

The artless manner in which Augusta uttered these words, shewed at once her ignorance of the prince’s passion for herself, and her unconsciousness that she was betraying the secrets of her own unhappiness.

“ Not only can I love without return, but love where hope must not even be indulged in, where return of my love would be crime and dishonor!”

Aurelius spoke with profound sadness, and for the first time, a glimpse of the truth flashed across his companion’s mind, she raised her head, with cheeks paler than marble, from the contrast with her dark tresses, and fixed her bright sorrowful eyes upon the prince with a terrified expression, awaiting his further speech.

“ And must I,” thought she, “ must I lose

then my only friend, my greatest consolation? O cruel fate! why is the spirit so strong and the flesh so weak?"

It might have been, that Aurelius in part divined the thoughts that were passing in her mind, for he resumed in a calm tone,

"It is useless to dwell, my dear countess, upon the miseries, which, since they cannot be evaded, it is our duty to bear with fortitude and, if possible, cheerfulness. Better therefore it is to turn the mind from the contemplation of the inevitable present to the distant glories of the future, to elevate the spirit above the grossness of material being, and endeavour to pierce the wonders of the infinite."

"Oh, prince! how I love to hear you speak of these things; there is indeed consolation in the sublime aspirations you have taught me to cherish! Would that Mesmer could share them! but to him the grave is the ultima Thule of existence—enjoyment is his only

God, health and wealth his greatest good, policy his highest morality."

"Such a creed can but lead to misery," said Aurelius, gravely, "yet once I entertained views little dissimilar. Yes, Augusta, I was a materialist, an organizationist, a cerebrationist, a man without a soul, without a future, without a God!"

"To explain these terms to you may appear impertinent," continued the prince, "nevertheless, as you may not have given much attention to these rapidly extending doctrines, I will briefly define their meaning. They are persons who believe the evidence of their senses---as far as it suits their tenets. Who look through microscopes and dissect with great precision, who believe in the existence of matter and nothing else. The laws which govern matter they regard as mere inherent properties of that matter; thoughts they regard as material impressions thrown off

by outward objects or peculiar turns and twists of the particles of brain. Man is a curious machine, or, as they term it, a wonderful piece of organism. The principle animating that organism they cannot explain, nor have I ever heard or read of their explaining satisfactorily either perception, motion, or any other invisible and untouchable principle of nature. Of course they have no God, nor, as far as I am aware, do they believe in the existence of any beings of a superior grade to themselves. They look upon the progressive chain of creation from the stone to the polypus, from the polypus to the highest order of mammalia, and they make a full stop, and say to nature 'thus far shalt thou go and no further.' Man is the last station on the railroad of creation! Vast in their own pride, these self-degraded pigmies, who take but little pains to investigate the systems of any philosophy but their own, speak with contempt, and define as visionaries and fools those to

whom the powers of the soul and the workings of the human mind, yet seem as something more than the mere combinations and arrangement of particles of insensate matter.—For if not *insensate*, their doctrine at once falls to the ground, and the question, what is the principle that animates these particles? still remains to mock them.—But the fact is, that the organs of the brain are, like the outward organs of the other senses, mere conductors of impressions, and themselves no more capable of thinking or perceiving than the ear of hearing or the eye of seeing, as the facts of somnambulism and clair-voyance abundantly testify. It is curious too, with regard to *faith---will---imagination---*the real and only agents in magnetism, these materialists, whilst vehemently exerting the very powers whose existence they refuse to acknowledge, ascribe all the effects they produce to the mere outward manifestations, such as passes with the hands,

which are, in fact, merely useful, as far as they tend to fix the faith and attention of the magnetiser, and by men of sufficiently powerful idiosyncrasies may be very well altogether dispensed with. I admit, however, that such men are of a rare order, nor do I myself pretend to such power. To this set I belonged—but belong no more.”

A sudden movement at this moment brought several people into the room where the Prince and Augusta were seated, the Countess was obliged to break off the conversation which so deeply interested her, and to smile and exert herself to exchange repartees with the fine ladies and picturesque dandies who came round her.

“Another time!” whispered the Carmelite, and glided away.

“Hem!” said Somerton, aside, to Lord Friskerton, “they were *tetê à tetê*, there is something in it I suppose. Ah, Countess!

what a beautiful costume, but everybody allows that you have the most perfect taste in the world!"

"What do you think, Count?" said Merlmore, who had that moment arrived in the garb of a judge, with which his great moustache ludicrously contrasted; "I have just received a letter from that man, Cashall, by whose bankruptcy you remember my poor brother Guy was ruined."

"Well?" said Biron, looking at his father-in-law, with an anxiety he could scarcely control.

"He is very ill, and wishes particularly to see me—you remember what you said about him, and Monville—and our bet, which by the way you lost."

"Yes?"

"Perhaps he is going to make a revelation, to confess something, in all probability, to poor Guy's; advantage, by the bye I had a letter

from the asylum, they give me every hope of his recovery."

"Indeed I am very glad to hear it, of course you will go down to see Cashall."

"Of course! I shall go down to-morrow afternoon, as I think he must be in a very dangerous state—perhaps dying."

"Why so?"

"Because his letter was directed only by Cashall himself and blotted with tears—it was written in a female hand."

Mesmer bit his lips, and shortly after quitting the room, ascended to his dressing room, locked the door with his usual precaution, and seating himself at a table, drew a small writing case from a drawer, and indited in a skilfully feigned hand the following words:

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I have been expecting to hear from you for some time past, relative to the

business we spoke of at our last meeting; I write this to remind you in case you should have forgotten it.

“Your’s truly,

“THOMAS SMITH.

“City.”

“There,” muttered the impostor, “no one can recognize the handwriting in *that*, I imagine, besides the contents are so indefinite that, in all probability, he will think it is something of little importance, that he has *really* forgotten, even should it fail in its intended effect.”

The Count then proceeded, with great care, to bind a silk handkerchief over his mouth, rose and cautiously unlocked a small casket, which he drew from the same drawer as the portfolio, from this he took a bottle containing a fine, colorless, impalpable powder, a small portion of which, holding the bottle always at arms

length, he placed in the letter. No one would have observed its presence had they not been aware of the fact. He then folded the letter with consummate art, so that none of the powder might escape, placed it in a secure envelope, and sealed it with a black seal. After which he directed it to—

“ ADOLPHUS CASHALL, Esq.

“ *Private and confidential.*”

However ill he may be, thought Biron, he is too wise to allow any of his family to open private letters for him, lest some of his clumsy rascalities should be brought to light; and after inhaling the contents of that paper—I frankly give him leave to reveal whatever he may please about me, or my doings.—Now I suppose some men would feel embarrassed, guilty, conscience stricken, after doing a deed like this. Ha—ha! not every one is a Biron!

So saying, having carefully re-locked the casket, and replaced it in the drawer, Mesmer descended with a smiling face to the ball room, and meeting on the way his valet---Sago, directed him to run with that letter instantaneously to the nearest post office.

“It will go, thought he, by the first post in the morning, and — *voila tout!*”

Mesmer arrived in the ball room just in time to hand the lovely Duchess of Villersden down to supper. This collation was laid out in several rooms, so that everybody could sit down at the same time, at their ease, and rebounded in every imaginable delicacy. The most costly wines, ices, in profuse variety, fragrant flowers and fruit in abundance, notwithstanding the time of the year, everything in short that was out of season, difficult to be obtained, and outrageously expensive. The supper had, indeed, every imaginable merit, but one, and that in the eyes of the guests

would have been regarded as a very unimportant virtue, whatever certain vulgar and extortionate tradesmen might have thought of the matter—it neither was, nor, to this day, ever has been paid for!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ACCIDENT.

ON their return to the dancing room, a most unexpected scene awaited the maskers. A mock quarrel, previously arranged, of course, took place between the Count and Lord Granville, the eldest son of the Duke of ———, who was dressed as Sir Walter Raleigh ; he was second only to Biron in beauty of face and figure, and by many, even preferred as more manly.

His talents were undeniable, and he had written a novel which had attained to deserved popularity.

“ Sir Walter, I defy you !” said Biron at length, in seeming exasperation.

“ Then draw, senhor Don Juan !” retorted his antagonist.

In a moment a space was cleared, and the company prepared themselves to witness a most entertaining display of skill on the part of the two graceful combatants.

Meanwhile the music commenced playing, and a thrill of expectation ran through the crowd.

Scarcely, however, had they crossed swords, and exchanged a few passes, when a shriek of agony resounded through the saloon, and Lord Granville fell heavily to the ground.

“ Good God !” cried Mesmer wildly, “ my foil has broken off near the end and I must have wounded him !”

So saying, Biron dashed away his sword,

and threw himself upon the ground by the side of his guest.

“ He is dying ! run for assistance—Granville ! speak ! say you forgive me for this wretched accident ! ”

Lord Granville opened his lips for an instant.

“ I—” he began ; he could get no further, he squeezed the hand of the Count with a last feeble effort, and his soul deserted the body, which for but seven and twenty years it had animated.

“ He is dead ! ” said Mesmer with a vacant stare, “ dead, and I—oh God ! what misery ! ”

“ Dear Mesmer ! ” exclaimed Augusta, “ it was no fault of yours ; you could not help the foil breaking ! ”

“ We are all witnesses of the accident ! ” exclaimed Friskerton, and a hundred voices re-echoed his words.

At that moment the living man was more pitied than the dead.

Sir Henry ———, a physician of eminence, who happened to be present, after examining the body of Lord Granville, announced the fact that life was hopelessly extinct.

“Do not say so ; let every means be tried ; I would give all my fortune, could he be restored to life !” exclaimed Biron with passionate earnestness.

“Everything shall be done that is possible,” replied the physician, “but all the wealth of the Indies could not restore the vital spark once extinct, or buy for Lord Granville one moment of life.”

Mesmer pressed his hand convulsively to his forehead. Every one crowded round him endeavouring to console him by assurances of the total absence of all blame to him, and similar appropriate remarks.

“We had better retire,” said one of the guests at length.

“Yes,” said Friskerton, “I think it would be better ; I will remain with my poor friend,

and Somerton, do you go directly to the Duke's and communicate the tidings to the servants that they may not be shocked to-morrow, in case it should find its way into the papers."

Friskerton felt all his friendship for Biron return at this sudden stroke of misfortune.

The Duchess of Villersden had fainted away and was sent home in her carriage, in an almost senseless state.

The body of Lord Granville was removed to one of the bed-rooms as soon as every hope of resuscitation had vanished.

Prince Aurelius lingered after the rest had departed, and going up to Biron, said feelingly, but firmly—

"My dear Count, this is a terrible accident, but to make yourself utterly miserable on that account, would be wrong ; you are perfectly innocent of this dreadful accident ; every body will acknowledge that."

“ No, no !” exclaimed Mesmer huskily, “ do not attempt to console me ; I feel already the pangs of despair ; people will point at me, and call me murderer ; I must die—die by my own hands !”

“ That would be madness,” said the Prince, and if for a moment a selfish hope found place within his mind, it was as momentarily repressed, and he said, taking Augusta aside—“ Let all fire-arms be removed from his room, and see that he does not obtain poison.”

Mesmer threw himself upon a sofa and appeared absorbed in the agony of his sensations. Augusta felt that she still loved him beyond all else on earth, and kneeling by his side, bathed his hand in her tears.

At length Aurelius and Friskerton took their leave—the dawn was already breaking.

“ I shall call to-morrow the first thing to enquire how he is,” said the former to Augusta.

“ I shall go, the first thing to-morrow, to

the Duke's, to give them the history of this terrible mishap," said Friskerton to the Count.

"Ah ! I shall be miserable until I hear that his family forgive me ; what *could* have put that unfortunate fencing idea into my head !"

"Do not lament the past," said Aurelius, "the idea was good in itself, and but for this misfortune, would have been lauded to the skies—farewell !"

"Farewell, Biron ; be a man !" said Lord Friskerton, in a voice choking with agitation as he hurried from the room.

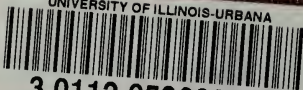
Never for an instant did it suggest itself to any of the Count's guests that the death of Lord Granville was anything but an utterly accidental occurrence.



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